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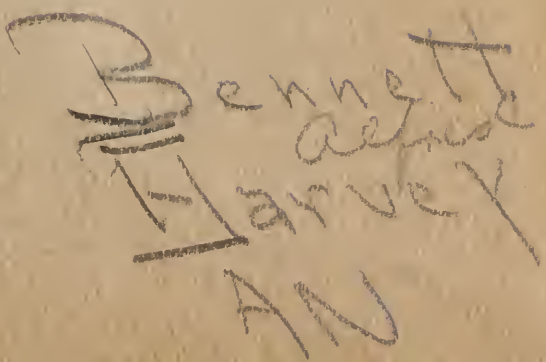
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MEMOIR

OF

ALFRED BENNETT,

FIRST PASTOR OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH, HOMER, N. Y.,

AND

SENIOR AGENT

OF THE

AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSIONARY UNION.

BY H. HARVEY.

SECOND EDITION.

NEW YORK:
EDWARD H. FLETCHER.
141 NASSAU-STREET.
1852.

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In presenting this work to the public, the publisher would bespeak the kind attention and interest of the friends of the lamented subject of its pages, and mention that the arrangements of its publication are such as to secure to his widow a share in the proceeds of its sale.

TO THE

HOMER BAPTIST CONGREGATION,

This Memorial

OF HIM

WHO FIRST MINISTERED TO THEM THE WORD OF LIFE,

AND, AFTER LONG AND FAITHFUL TOIL IN THE WORK OF CHRIST,

DIED WITH PEACEFUL TRIUMPH IN THEIR MIDST,

Is affectionately Dedicated by

THEIR PASTOR.

PREFACE.

This volume, prepared in the midst of feeble health and the pressure of pastoral duties, is now with diffidence submitted to the Christian public. The subject of it held no classic pen. He belonged to a generation of men whose chief power was in oral, not written communication. In speech he was richly gifted; but the vivacity, force, and ardor which characterized his discourse, he was never able to transfer to the written page. As his biography must necessarily be made up, to no inconsiderable extent, from his correspondence, the reader will, it is feared, be painfully conscious that the portraiture here given lacks the glow and richness of the living original.

The materials were not abundant. Most of his letters have been lost. The account of his conversion and exercises respecting the ministry was given by him only at the urgent request of the church in Homer. Of the remaining part of his life, he declined making any statements, remarking that it had been public, in the midst of

his brethren, and he would say nothing about it. This was characteristic of him.

His memory will live long in the hearts of the churches, and with a freshness with which, from these circumstances, it can never be embalmed in the printed volume. He was emphatically a man who "served his own generation;" and while the results of his life will doubtless continue to be felt on earth until the consummation of all things, he has left no written memorials to represent adequately, in after times, the rare excellences of his character.

The writer can only say, he has used to the best of his ability the limited materials within his reach; and the work is now committed to the press, with the ardent hope that it may excite many to emulate the exalted Christian virtues of this venerated servant of God, and may thus subserve the interests of vital godliness, and receive the approbation of the Heavenly Master.

Homer, January 20th, 1852.

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MEMOIR OF REV. ALFRED BENNETT.

CHAPTER I.

YOUTH.

Alfred Bennett was born September 26, 1780, in Mansfield, Windham county, Connecticut. His parents, Asa and Mary Bennett, were both pious; the former a member of the Baptist church at Hampton, the latter connected with the Congregational church in Mansfield. In later life, however, his mother also became a Baptist.

The influences of home were strictly religious, and many circumstances are mentioned which attest the godly character of Mr. and Mrs. Bennett. At the family altar, morning and evening, they were accustomed to seek instruction from the sacred Word, and bow in thanksgiving and supplication. The lofty moral principles which nurtured the manly virtues of the earlier Puritans had not then passed away, as among the defects of a sterner age; and in this domestic circle they still

exerted their potent influence, in the healthful restraints placed around the young, and the sacredness with which they invested the institutions of religion and virtue. The attendance of their children upon the public worship of God was also strictly enjoined, and the Sabbath seldom found their place vacant in the sanctuary. In obedience to the apostolic injunction, they earnestly endeavored to bring up their offspring "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Nor was their pious zeal unrewarded. They had the happiness of seeing the whole family group become members of the family of God, and attain to positions of eminent usefulness in the earthly church; and though they have long since entered into rest, their children's children, at this day, rise up and call them blessed.

Alfred was their second son. The eldest, Asa, became a subject of Divine grace early in life, and for many years subsequently, as an officer in the Baptist church at Homer, was a worthy coadjutor of his brother, and distinguished for his enlightened Christian zeal and eminently godly life. The next younger is Rev. Alvin Bennett, of South Wilbraham, Mass., who still survives, widely known and revered as a devoted and successful minister of the Gospel. The remaining son, Elea-

zar, continued to reside for many years on the paternal estate, and lived and died a member of the church to which his father was attached. The only daughter, Sarah, became wife of Rev. William Palmer, an esteemed minister of Christ, in Norwich, Conn.

Thus God honored parental faithfulness. The seeds of life early sown, and watered with many prayers and tears, at last sprung up and have borne a rich harvest. From that pious home, where the fear of God dwelt and His commands were obeyed, have flowed streams of spiritual blessings, which must continue to extend and multiply, till the latter day glory bursts upon the world and the Most High sets up the Throne of Judgment.

The nearest Baptist church was at Hampton, about fifteen miles distant. The churches of this religious denomination had been until lately comparatively few in the land, and though less restricted in Connecticut than in Massachusetts, their growth was much repressed by oppressive legal enactments. Congregationalism was the State religion, and the law required every person to contribute to that form of worship, unless a certificate was obtained certifying that he regularly attended and paid at some other church.

This union of State and Church necessarily cast the whole influence of government against every form of dissent, and made it the secular interest of men to attend upon the ministry thus recognized by law. It was generally deemed schismatical to differ from the established religion, and those who ventured to do so were commonly accounted restless disturbers of good order and the general religious welfare. The Baptist church had been of late, indeed, rapidly increasing, notwithstanding these adverse influences; yet they were not even then numerous, and their members were often widely scattered. Mr. Bennett's family, therefore, usually attended the Congregational church in Mansfield, and received their religious education under the public instruction of the ministry there.

Alfred was distinguished in boyhood for that vivacious, buoyant spirit which, chastened by grace, was ever characteristic of him in maturer life. He was the acknowledged leader in all the frolics and sports of the boys. If any wild, boyish prank had been played in the neighborhood, nobody would believe that Alfred Bennett was not at the head of it. Never profane, or malicious, or immoral, and always having great tenderness of conscience, he loved what was deemed innocent

mischief as he loved his life. This gay, mirthful spirit made him a universal favorite among his companions, and surrounded him continually with increasing temptations to levity. He afterwards ever regarded this disposition to lightness and trifling as the great sin of his youth.

It is not known that any serious religious impressions were made upon his mind until he was about twelve years old. One evening, at his mother's request, he read to her from Hervey's Meditations, and the thoughts then suggested awakened within some anxieties respecting his eternal welfare. The influence of this, however, was only transient; it disappeared soon in greater frivolity and waywardness.

The great awakening which was experienced under the labors of Whitefield, Edwards, and other distinguished men in the first half of the eighteenth century, had long since ceased, though its memory lingered still in the breasts of the fathers in the churches, and many who had then experienced the riches of grace lived as monuments of those mighty manifestations of the power of God. The lax theology, against which those holy men had so earnestly contended, again largely pervaded the teachings of the schools and the ministrations of the pulpit. The doctrines of grace which had

then been mighty, through God, to awaken the conscience and bow the heart before the Throne, were extensively discarded, and looser sentiments, exalting the sinner and abasing God, were followed by their legitimate result, the decrease of true spiritual life. The sovereignty of God, the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, and other kindred truths, which lie at the basis of the Gospel, and were weapons attended with supernatural energy when wielded by those early revivalists, were now often thrown aside and exposed to popular odium. Many faithful men, indeed, yet lifted up their voice for the truth, and numerous were the pulpits where the light of these great doctrines was never quenched; but the popular tendency in the churches was in the other direction. And the ministry under which Alfred Bennett was reared, as he afterwards remarked to the writer, was wont to teach, what was then a common sentiment, "If you do on your part, God will do on His part;" intending in that expression to direct the sinner to his own good works as a means of justification, instead of the righteousness of Christ, and overlooking the total natural depravity of the soul and the need of the Spirit's renewing power.

The year 1797, as well as a number previous, was marked as a period of great religious declen-

sion throughout New England, among all denominations of Christians. The faithful wept in secret over the utter indifference to vital religion generally manifested, and many a godly minister was fainting at his post on account of the apparently increased hardness of heart among the people. But God is not unrighteous to forget the work and labor of His servants. In the Spring of the following year an extensive revival began, and with great power spread rapidly over the country. The annals of that period furnish the following record: "A great work came on in the spring of 1798, in many parts of America. It began at Mansfield, in Connecticut, in a remarkable manner. A letter from Windham, in October, mentions it and says, 'The Spirit of the Lord seemed to sweep all before it, like an overflowing flood, though with very little noise or crying out. It was wonderful to see the surprising alteration in that place in so short a time. I conclude there are not less than an hundred souls converted in that town since the work began. It soon after began in Hampton, but did not spread with the same degree of rapidity as in Mansfield. The same happy work has lately taken place in Ashford.' Soon after this, Hartford, the capital city, experienced the like work among the Congregational and Baptist societies."

This great awakening was felt in all parts of New England, and multitudes were made to rejoice in hope of eternal life. Dr. Tyler remarks, in his memoir of the excellent Nettleton, "During a period of four or five years, commencing with 1798, not less than one hundred and fifty churches in New England were favored with the special effusions of the Holy Spirit; and thousands of souls, in the judgment of charity, were translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son."

Of this gracious work, which began in his native town, Mr. Bennett was among the earliest subjects; and during the years in which it continued, he labored with all the energy of his ardent mind for its promotion. Many others, also, of the eminent men who have been leaders in the church of God during the past half century, date their conversion during this extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The reader will, therefore, be gratified with further extracts from the history of those years, illustrating the character of this revival and the manner in which the work was carried on. The first is from a letter of Rev. Mr. Blood, pastor of a Baptist church in Shaftsbury, Vermont. "In about two months after the work began, the whole town seemed to be affected.

Conference meetings were attended two or three times a week in almost every neighborhood; and it was surprising to me that scarcely a single instance appeared of any overheated zeal or flight of passion. Both sinners under conviction and those newly brought into the liberty of the Gospel, conversed in their meetings with the greatest freedom. They spoke one at a time a few words in the most solemn manner I ever heard people in my life. And in general they spake so low, that their assemblies must be perfectly still, or they could not hear them; yet a remarkable power attended their conversation. Sinners would tremble, as though they felt themselves in the immediate presence of the great Jehovah. Some of all ranks and characters have been taken, from the most respectable members of society to the vilest in the place. Some of our most noted Deists have bowed the knee to King Jesus; and a number of Universalists have forsaken their delusions and embraced the truth."

Rev. Mr. Powers, a Congregational minister on Deer Island, in Penobscot Bay, writing in March, 1799, says: "Perhaps there hath not been a work so powerful and so much like the work of fifty-eight years ago. In a time of such extraordinaries, it could not reasonably be expected but some

things would be a little wild and incoherent, considering the various tempers, infirmities, and dispositions of mankind; but I believe my young dear brother Merrill, together with experienced Christians, was very careful to distinguish the precious from the vile; to correct errors, to set them in the way of his steps, so that there appears to be no prevalence of enthusiasm among them, according to the best information. How great the number is of those who have been brought to hope, I am not able to give any tolerable account. Some say there are about an hundred; others, about double that number. I believe they are all very uncertain. Blessed be God, the work is yet going on, though not with equal rapidity. And now, dear sir, let your imagination paint to your view the striking scene of an hundred souls, men, women, and children, at the same time under the work of the law. The tears, sobs, groans and cries issuing from scores at a time; all the terrors of the law crowding and pressing in upon them; their sins, in infinite number and aggravations, staring them in the face; all their old vain hopes gone, and cut off, and every refuge failing! Hear them freely confessing their old abominations, their former enmity to the great doctrines of original sin, election, the sovereignty of divine free

grace, the power of God displayed in effectual vocation; above all, the justice of God in their damnation! How often are souls brought out into peace and comfort of the love of God, and the sweet consolations of the Holy Spirit! The dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and live."

This revival, of which the above extracts will give the reader some conception, broke out in Mr. Bennett's nineteenth year. It found him careless respecting the welfare of his soul, and the great concerns of the eternal world; it left him a distinguished monument of Divine grace, humble, penitent, believing, earnestly seeking the everlasting well-being of souls around him.

CHAPTER II.

CONVERSION.

The narration here given of his religious experience was taken from his own lips, during the painful illness which closed his life. The language is for the most part his own; it has been subjected only to such revision as seemed to be required for brevity and clearness.

"In the spring of 1798 I went to live with a farmer, a neighbor of my father, to assist for the season as a hired man. Soon after, it began to be mentioned that there were serious impressions and signs of revival among the people. 'Well,' thought I, 'I have no concern with that. There may be occasion for it in others: I want nothing to do with it.' In a day or two it was again remarked that there certainly was some revival, for such and such persons were under awakening. I thought, if I were as bad as they there would be need of reform, but as it is I am good enough without. In this state of mind, returning from worship on the Sabbath, I called at my father's, and before I left my mother took occasion to talk with me about my sins and my soul. I sought to put her off, as I had done before; but she remarked, 'My son, Jesus Christ is passing through this town, and you will need his blessing by and by: you better seek it now.' This word took deep hold of my heart. I returned home full of anxious thought. settled in my mind that I needed religion. I said, 'What right have I to expect to be saved, when I have never asked God for salvation? I will now seek the welfare of my soul. I have been an awfully wicked sinner. Religion, however, is a matter between God and my own soul. I will

attend to it, but will not make such ado about it as others, so as to make my feelings public.' With this resolution I passed the evening in much thought, reflecting upon my sins and my eternal interests.

"The next day, while I was revolving my lost condition, an old man came into the field where I was at work; and by-the-by, he was a poor, wicked, profane, Sabbath-breaking, drunken man, whom, though a near neighbor, I had never before heard speak a word on the subject of religion, nor did I afterwards. He said, 'Did you hear the bell toll?' It had just tolled for a man of about his age and character. I said I did, and supposed it was for Mr. H. He replied, 'So I suppose; but only think what has become of that man! Religion *is* an important thing: it is indispensable.' And bursting into tears, and pulling his hoary locks over his shoulders, as they hung in ringlets, he said, 'Look here, I am an old and gray-headed sinner; it is impossible for me to be saved. I must die and go to hell. But, Alfred, you are young; *you* may be religious; and I conjure you by all the mercies of heaven, by all the pains of hell, attend to it now: don't put it off.' I wept much, and he wept, and we parted. Notwithstanding this solemn admonition, to avoid giving

any impression that there was seriousness on my mind, I went that evening among my young companions, and perhaps was never more heedless and volatile than during that night up to a late hour. On my return, however, my sorrows were redoubled, arising from the fear that I had now ruined my soul forever.

"The next day found me exceedingly wretched. I attended the funeral of the man above alluded to, but passed through all the exercises of the occasion without feeling. It seemed to me I could not feel; my heart was hardened. I looked upon the corpse, and thought, 'Well, were I in his place, were would my poor soul be?' hoping thus to break my hard heart, but it seemed to grow harder still. The revival broke out with increased power at that funeral, and I found myself surrounded by a number, weeping and conversing about their souls and the prospects of the future. I retired in company with a cousin, E. B., about my own age, and my greatest earthly friend and confidant, who seemed as gay and trifling as usual. We stopped at his father's house, and were soon followed by several other young friends with whom we were wont to associate. Seeing me quiet and grave, they began to inquire the cause, and, on my answering evasively, insisted that some one must

have offended me. My cousin E. took me aside, and reminding me of our long and confidential friendship, besought me to disclose the reason of my unusual sadness. The waters of affliction had by this time risen so high in my soul as to bear away all idea of secresy, and I said, 'I am an undone man. I am a sinner. My dear E., I am lost.' He burst into tears, and we sat down and wept together. On my return home, my employer went out with me upon the farm, and kindly inquired what was the matter, whether I was dissatisfied with him, or something had made me discontented with my situation. The disclosure already made to my cousin had only increased my wretchedness, and I resolved to be perfectly frank with him. I replied, 'I am undone. I am going right to hell. I see no way to avoid it. There can be no mercy for me.' And I supposed that he would sympathize with me. Instead of this he smiled, and I thought, 'Now my sorrows are full. I am going to hell, and all are glad of it. I am so wicked that it will be a relief to others when I am gone.' This more deeply impressed me with the certainty of my miserable doom.

"In awful apprehension of the loss of my soul, I retired to a barn, and walked the floor for some hours that evening. I tried to repent, but could

not; I tried to pray, but had no utterance. I would have loved God, but had no power; I sought to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but it was in vain. My heart was as adamant; and sinking deeper in despair, I resolved that something must be done, my soul must not be lost through neglect; and having always been instructed under a ministry which taught, 'If you do on your part, God will do on His part,' I determined my soul should not be lost through any fault of mine. I therefore marked out a rigid course of duties to be performed, agreeing with my heart that I would pray so many times each day, and often read the Bible; attend all the religious meetings within my power, and converse with all religious people who could give me instruction; for I cared not now who knew that I was under concern for my sins: and above all, I determined that I would no more indulge in trifling conversation, neither should any man ever see another smile upon my face; for the terrors of the law encompassed my soul, coming over me like an avalanche, from the text, *For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment;* and how many idle words had I spoken!

"This course of duties I adhered to during

eight or ten days most firmly. At one time I had to put my hand upon my mouth and hold my lips together till I left the company, fearing I might say some idle word and thus peril my soul. At length I began to grow better, as I esteemed it, and wondered that God did not convert me. I was conscious I needed forgiveness, and thought I had now arrived at the point where I might expect it; I had done all I could, and had done it again and over again. At this state of my feelings, some one meeting me one evening, said, 'E. B. is converted.' With the sound of that word, there arose in my bosom a feeling of which till that time I had remained unconscious. I could not have believed my heart was so desperately wicked. For there burst forth a spirit of enmity against God which I had no power to control. I said God is unjust, I am as good as E. B. is. I have prayed as much; I have attended meetings as much; I am as much entitled to salvation as he; and if God saves him and leaves me, I hate Him. I wish I could destroy Him. My heart said, just give me the power that you possess and I will put you off the throne. I never saw any object which I hated as I then hated my Maker. My misery was extreme; for I plainly saw that God was on the throne, and I was in His hand,

entirely at His disposal; yet I hated Him. I felt then the pains of hell get hold upon me. No one has had need since to prove to me there was a hell; I found it then in my own experience. It seems that God graciously designed to make me a monument of His mercy, or He would have destroyed me in that awful and blasphemous spirit in which I then gloried. I can only say of that night, let it not be numbered among the days of my life.

"Next morning, being May 25, 1798, as the sun was coming forth, something seemed to question me, evidently with reference to the exercises of the previous evening, saying, 'What have you been doing?' I said, Fighting against God. 'But,' said the inquirer, 'What has God done?' I replied, He is going to save E. B. and not me; and I am as good as he is. 'But has God done *you* wrong? Has He not done you good and not evil all the days of your life? Raised you up friends; taken care of you when sick; healed you; given you the Gospel to enjoy?' And the goodness of God passed before me with a flood of light, astonishing and confounding me. I said, God has done all this. Ah! more. Yet I have hated Him with all my heart. Again the inquirer seemed to address me: 'Gird yourself now and meet your

own engagement. You said, last evening, that God was unjust. Put your finger now upon the instance in which God ever acted unjustly, if you can.' I found myself in trouble. I looked this way and that for evidence, determined to establish the injustice of God; but I utterly failed. It pressed me, and pressed me to the issue; and I felt that I was condemned. In an instant it burst upon my mind, God is surely right, and I am wrong. My soul is lost. You have destroyed yourself; God cannot be blamed. He is clear when He condemneth. Yet I exceedingly wish I could have been saved. The character of God does not look to me as it did last night. Companionship with Him looks delightful. I would that I could dwell with Him. But that is now forever impossible; my presence would spoil Heaven. I dare not ask Him to save me. He may well save E. B. and everybody else; He will only need me as a monument of His just and holy indignation against sin forever; and there could not have been a fitter one selected to illustrate the hatefulness of a rebel and the forbearance of God, still, I wish I could have been saved; there appears something attractive and glorious in the holy society of Heaven.

"Again something seemed to say to me, 'How

do you know but you might have been saved, except for the wickedness of last night?' I reflected upon my past life, and said, That might have been possible, but what good to think of it now, when my sin then was unto death? Then I said to myself, That was you, my wicked heart; you put me beyond the reach of God's mercy by the blasphemous indulgence of your enmity against God. And I fell out with myself there, and I believe I hated myself then as much as I had God the evening previous. I thought there could not be another such an abominable, hateful, loathesome wretch in the universe as I was; I wished I could be annihilated; not that I would lose my existence, but the identity of my being; I thought I would be ashamed even to go to hell, and be known there as Alfred Bennett. It seemed the devil would be tormenting me, making sport of my misery, and that justly, on account of my sin against a just and holy God; I, a worm of the dust, had dared to blaspheme His name and defy Him. But such a wish I saw was unavailing, I had sinned in my own person and I must be punished in my own person. While reflecting upon the compassion of God, a glow of delight sprang up within me, which caused a smile upon my face. This alarmed me exceedingly; for I

thought I had committed the unpardonable sin and laughed in the presence of God. And I said, That was you, my wicked heart. Why will you longer provoke God? I know I must go to hell; there is no possible hope for me; but I would not sin again against God. He is good, and though my poor soul is lost, I would not sin any more against Him. It seemed that I could not live through that day; I had no anticipations of continuing till night upon the face of the earth. In view of this, I said to the family at breakfast, I do not expect to live till night, and shall probably not come in again; I wish you to say to my parents and others, if need be, there is no hope in my case; no mercy for me; I am lost—justly lost; I cannot die without leaving my testimony behind me that God is just. He is right, and I am wrong—altogether wrong; I am my own destroyer.

"Thus I went forth to my labor, an object of the deepest self-detestation, not wondering that God should hate me, for I hated myself; I thought the very trees on the road-side scowled and lowered at me; the grass seemed to grudge my touch as I walked. Nature appeared as if at war with me on account of my wickedness. My burden seemed to weigh a ton, and I was sinking

gradually down, down, down to the pit without a bottom. But suddenly the strings seemed to break, and it slid off my burdened soul; and, wonderful to relate! starting up, I found, as it appeared to me, all nature was changed and I was in a new world. The sun shone with a splendor of which I had before no conception. The trees, waving in beauty, had not begrudged me existence, nor the grass; they were only praising their Maker and acting up to their nature and being. Some passages of scripture, also, came sweetly into my mind; such as these: *He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He bare our sins in His own body on the tree.* And something whispered sweetly to my soul: *This is the way God saves sinners; Jesus Christ died for them.* My soul melted and became like water. I said, O blessed Jesus! Thou art altogether lovely! Is it possible that Thou canst have mercy on such a rebellious, sinful worm! And while considering the love of God and the plan of salvation revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ, my soul was lifted above the world; I laid down my implements of husbandry, for it seemed to me I would not have stooped down to pick up the world; I was overwhelmed with joy, and said, O that I could make

the world hear! How I would tell them about Jesus Christ dying for sinners! I immediately went to the nearest house, not doubting that they would believe me when I told them what was to me manifest of the glory of God. But they seemed alarmed. The woman asked me a question which led me to suppose she thought the change was in me (for up to this time I had conceived that it was in the real appearance of the world); and I said, What if it be true that this change is only in me and this prove all delusion now? Still, thought I, it is a happy delusion, and I cannot give it up yet. I left and went to my father's, where I found some congenial spirits who understood the real import of such language. From thence I sought E. B., and spent the day most happily from house to house in company with converts. I loved God; I loved the Saviour; and it was the high purpose of my soul to live for His glory.

"In this resolution I was firmly settled. For why should I transgress the law of God again? Why not live to please Him; then die to praise Him? Sin seemed too degrading to be thought of by such a favored one, as it now appeared I had been. With this happy frame of mind I took my place in social worship, exhorting the godly to

hold fast their profession without wavering, and sinners to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him there seemed such glorious fulness; He was able to save to the uttermost all that came unto God by Him."

CHAPTER III.

A DREAM.

At this point a mysterious event occurred, which cast a dark shadow over his spiritual hopes for many years. Different views will doubtless be entertained respecting its nature; but affecting so deeply as it did his religious character and enjoyments, it claims a conspicuous place in the annals of his life. The fervor of his imagination, indeed, combined with emotions of heart capable of the most intense excitement, is sufficiently marked in the history of his conversion, and must have reminded the intelligent reader of the peculiarities so strikingly developed in the character of Bunyan, as delineated in his inimitable autobiography—grace abounding to the chief of sinners. But the exercises of his mind previous to the night here

referred to, during the month which had now elapsed since his conversion, were those of joyful fruits and hope, and it does not appear that any thing had occurred which, by the ordinary laws of mental action, would naturally lead to such a dream. Not one dark hour had dimmed his view of Christ, or thrown its baleful shade over his prospects of blessedness.

"One night," he remarked, "I retired to rest as usual, and in my sleep thought I was dead. I could look back, and see them preparing to bury my body. It seemed to me I was conscious that I was dead, but I was miserable. I had come up almost to heaven, but stepped one step short of it, and was sinking gradually but certainly down to hell. I did not see God, nor heaven, nor hell; but was in indescribable anguish of spirit through fear of the great white throne and Him that sat upon it, which appeared to be approaching in all its terrors. Looking up, I said, There! He is coming. The heavens will break, and I shall see Him, and He will frown upon me. At this moment my father passed me. He was unspeakably happy in anticipation of the very thing which I dreaded—the coming of the Just One. We recognized the relations which had existed, but they remained no longer; all natural affections had

ceased on the part of both. And here eternity seemed to open to my mind as it is, and as, it now seems to me, it will appear again in reality—endless, boundless. On the right hand, the state of the righteous, on the left hand, the condition of the wicked, was unalterably fixed; God's immutable purpose being the great gulph between. Here I awoke, and was in such a state of nervous agitation, that the bed was rocking beneath me.

"Something seemed immediately to say, 'You are a hypocrite.' My heart replied, I fear I am. 'Why yes,' said the accuser, 'God has just shown it to you,' and my trembling soul fell in with the suggestion. I said, Woe is me! I am undone! Darkness came over my mind, dense as that over Egypt; it was darkness that could be felt. My comfort in religion was gone, for I had no hope. My pleasures in this life were lost, for I had nothing worth living for. My prospects were all blasted. I was but almost a Christian, and should never be permitted to enter with joy the pearly gates, and tread the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. The scene was changed. From the heights of the most buoyant hope, I was cast down to the depths of despair. My friends sought to know the cause. I could only say, I am deceived; I am a hypocrite;

I am lost. I dared not reveal to them the reason; for, I thought, these young converts are Christians —I have no doubt of that; and this was not given for their benefit, but for mine. If they should see that I am not a Christian, they might doubt the reality of their own exercises, and give themselves needless sorrow. I kept my place in the room for prayer, laboring to establish Christians, warning them of the danger of deception, exhorting all to a careful, Scriptural, prayerful examination of their hope, and entreating sinners to be reconciled to God, with more fervency than ever before. For, I thought, if I must be finally lost, I would not have them. When godly ministers preached, the description they gave of the righteous and their prospects was to me glowing and animating; my heart would warm under it. But still it was not for me; I was but a hypocrite, and might not take the children's bread; I had no right to be in their society, however desirable it appeared. And when they described the wicked and their awful doom, my soul revolted at the thought of eternal companionship with them, for I loathed sin. I said, Would God I could have been saved from such a doom!

"Thus I would go home, finding nothing to refresh my wounded, sinking, perishing soul, and

for three months I had no quiet. A Christian's hope appeared to be forbidden: God had said I must not indulge it. Still sin was a burden to me, and it was my delight to pray and mingle with Christians and read the Holy Scriptures. I had continual sorrow at my heart, and was sinking into a settled melancholy. My parents and friends, with much patience and affection, sought to remove the difficulty, fearing that I should become deranged under it; but I strove the rather to fortify myself, and resist their kindest efforts. At last my mother said, 'My son, do you not think you have had light?' I admitted I had, and great light too. She replied, '*Live up then to the light you have had.*' This was effectual. I saw at a glance that, let me go to heaven or hell at last, it was my duty to serve God: I had light enough to direct my course in that. I saw that for a man to serve God because he was going to heaven, was mere selfishness. It was my duty to serve God in holiness, leaving my future destiny in His keeping entirely. This led me at once into the performance of all the duties enjoined upon a Christian. I had light enough to see that His claims upon me were paramount. After this, some little glimpse of hope would occasionally appear to my mind, but vanish almost as soon as seen. In this state

of anxiety respecting my spiritual condition, my mind continued about fifteen years.

"This event in my religious experience has been seldom referred to during my life; and if I am here asked, after fifty years' observation and reflection, what is my own opinion of it, I must answer: There can be but two views taken of the matter. The impression it made upon me was either true or not true. If the former, then I am what it at that time seemed I was, a hypocrite, a deceived person, lost to all hope of heaven forever. And if this be so, it is just. God has shown me that I have destroyed myself; though it is a most fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, a subject of His punishment. If it was not true, then it was directed to exercise my mind, as a disciplinary antidote against the uprisings of my naturally volatile disposition, and as a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, to keep in check those workings of spiritual pride which might otherwise have proved my ruin.

"After my public profession of Christ," he continues, "fearful forebodings of my future ruin would still stand as a sentinel at the presentment of every duty, to keep me back from its performance; and I went as a man with a rope about his neck, conscious of deserving only execution, yet

desirous of serving and pleasing God. With little hope of success, and much less of my personal salvation, I entered the ministry, impelled only by the all-controlling principle of acting up to the light given me. 'For,' I said, 'it is my duty to endeavor to prevent others from going down to destruction, if I must at last go thither myself.' Thus shut out from hope, I was urged to duty by the sternness of circumstances, scarcely free for an hour at a time from the awful apprehensions arising from the suggestion ever sounding in my ears, 'You are a hypocrite, you are a hypocrite.' Years passed on with fearful conflicts and forebodings in my own soul, unknown to any human being. Occasions occurred when my mind enjoyed enlargement, peculiar comfort in prayer and in the ministration of the Word. This would cheer me for the time. I would say, Is it not possible after all that I am a Christian? I will be candid in the examination of the matter, and not look only on the dark side. I have enjoyed comfort in my own soul, both in private exercises and the public labors of the ministry. The evidence is before me that the church has been built up and prospered under my labors; sinners, also, have been converted and added to the church, making sound and healthy members. And is this

no evidence? Would God thus show me favor if I was not His child? Then it would return upon me, What evidence is all this? Do not the Scriptures say, *The stranger shall feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your vine-dressers?* This also accords with the ordinary workings of nature. Does not the farmer have his ploughs, and drags, and implements of culture, to fit the soil and aid in maturing his crop? But when their work is done, they are broken to pieces and burned up. So it will be with you when God has done with your service. Did he not speak the truth by Balaam, although he loved the wages of unrighteousness, and died among the profane? Was not Saul among the prophets for a time, although he sought to witches before he died? Had not the Saviour a Judas in His company, till he accomplished as an hireling his day, when he died, and went to his own place? What right, then, have you to think you are a Christian because of these incidental tokens of usefulness? Thus was I harassed with fears, which constantly kept me humble at the feet of Christ. I could do nothing without Him.

"During those seasons of revival which were experienced in Homer, my mind would be so much engrossed with the welfare of others, that I had no

time to devote to my own state. Although inwardly there were heavy conflicts which wasted my physical strength, I dared not reveal the secret of my suffering to the people: it seemed that it could do no good, and it might do much harm. Now, it was like the secret whisperings of an enemy, piercing through every avenue of my soul; and again, it would be a loud and boisterous assault, like an army rushing to victory, and saying with trumpet tones, What right have *you* here? You are a hypocrite. And my quivering heart would answer, I fear I am. The scenes of that night would again vividly pass before my mind and sink me in despair. Thus I went bowing under sorrows, goaded with fears, and would often cry, Thou Lamb of God! to whom should I go, but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life. My soul clings to Thy cross, and pleads Thy precious, pardoning blood. With Thee to sustain me, I will venture on. In the midst of these harrowing sensations, there would be occasionally a temporary relief. Perhaps during the public exercises of the Sabbath, I would forget myself, lost in the charms of the Saviour. I would have great freedom in prayer, and peculiar nearness to the Throne; unusual light and power would attend the opening of the Scriptures, aiding me in the argu-

ment and carrying me beyond myself in the blessed work of preaching the Gospel of the grace of God. Heaven would appear with such brightness, as the place where God reigns and Jesus dwells, that I would urge the saints to look upward and take courage, press on and be faithful unto death; the conflict would soon be over, and then, oh then! what a rest remained beyond! What rejoicings would fill the bosoms of saints in that world of glory! My heart would yearn over sinners. With overwhelming interest in my own soul, I urged upon them arguments to repent and believe the Gospel, till many in the congregation would be melted into tears; and I would say, *How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim?* while still there would be an inward consciousness that I had discharged my duty, and should they perish, I was pure from their blood. Yet immediately after this, perhaps while some brother was closing the meeting by prayer, it would come rushing upon me, like a tornado: 'You have been telling Christians about the blessedness of Heaven, but you will never go there; it is not for you. You are a hypocrite.' And my spirit would fall in with the suggestion, and again that night and its dream would pass with terrible distinctness before me. I would be manacled and carried back to that ex-

ercise which filled me with such darkness and confusion, and before the brother had closed his prayer, my thoughts would be in such tumult, that I could not tell what to say in dismissing the assembly. Fearing I might use some improper expression, I took much pains to fix firmly in my mind the benediction of the apostle: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.*

"Bound thus, hand and foot, I knew not what to do, nor whither to fly. I dreaded appointments to preach; and time passed on with little or no comfort in my own soul in the work of the ministry. Sometimes encouragement came from this expression: *He knoweth the way that I take, and when He hath tried me I shall come forth like gold.* Again, I was distressed and cast down lest He should say—and if He did, I knew it would be just—as He did to Israel when in the hand of their enemies: *Why seek ye unto me? Seek ye unto the gods that ye have chosen; for I will deliver you no more.* It seemed to settle, at length, like a disease upon my mind, until my health gave way under it. My appetite and strength failed. It was as an incubus constantly pressing upon me above strength, so that I despaired of life.

"One afternoon, after having preached in a neighboring town and enjoyed much comfort during the exercise, darkness had as usual succeeded, making me exceedingly nervous. About dusk two men called at the house where I was entertained, to obtain refreshment for the night. I was introduced to them as a Baptist minister who had preached that afternoon in the neighborhood. They said in return, 'We are very glad to meet you, sir, and become acquainted. We, also, are friends of the Lord Jesus Christ, members of the Presbyterian denomination. We are from the State of Vermont, on our way down the Ohio river into the new country.' I replied, I do not know what advantage it can be to you to make my acquaintance; for I am but a hypocrite at best. There, thought I, what did I say that for? Fool that I was, to utter that expression. If it is true, I need not have told them of it; they are strangers. Too many are disposed now to make accusations against us as a denomination. These men, as they go their way, may hear reproaches cast upon us, and will join the accusers, saying, no doubt these things are so, for as we came through the State of New York, we fell in with a Baptist minister in reputable standing who honestly told us he was nothing but a hypocrite. The

expression I had used so preyed upon my mind, lest it might become matter of reproach to the cause, that I resolved to give them the full reasons for it; thinking, also, that as they were men of experience, something might be suggested to my benefit. I therefore rehearsed to them in detail the exercise I had in my sleep. They listened with attention, and at the close one of them looking at the other said, 'Do you believe a Christian ever felt the pains of hell?' 'No,' replied his companion, 'I do not.' 'Nor I either,' said the first, with a significant nod of the head and wink of the eye. Now, thought I, my case is hopeless. For I am sure I have tasted the bitterness of the cup of sorrow, and these men, who are competent to judge, do not believe I am a Christian. My friends, when at any time I have hinted at the thing, have wondered that I should be so foolish as to let a dream trouble me so: but these men are candid, they have no interest in the matter, and have judged impartially. Thus my sorrows increased and the floods overwhelmed my soul. For several weeks my mind was a prey to every alarming thought. I did not so much dread the pains of hell, as I did the loss of holy society: my fear was to be shut out of Heaven.

"One day, while musing, these words came

suddenly with power upon my mind: *The pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow.* It seemed to lift me a thousand feet high in a moment; for I said, David was certainly a saint. Yet he says the pains of hell gat hold upon him, and who knows but I *may* be a Christian yet! I had no evidence that I was, but the possibility that I might be, the bare idea that there was a chance of my being a Christian, was sweeter and more precious to my soul than all the pleasures of earth or the gold in a thousand mines. From this time my mind underwent a great change in regard to my spiritual state. It became a mount of observation. I thought, I have now been for many years filled with apprehensions respecting my future welfare. My anxieties have been intense. A careful survey and review of my evidences of Christian character has been carried as far as it is possible for me to carry it this side of positive certainty, and what have I gained? It has broken my rest and wasted my strength. I will therefore give up this long-agitated question of my future happiness or misery, leaving my soul in the hands of God, to be disposed of by Him. I will endeavor to live in such a manner that I may enjoy the company of the saints in this life, even if I am excluded from them in another. My mind at once

became more calm and steadfast in the exercise of confidence in Jesus Christ. About the same time, also, the remark was made in my hearing by a Christian friend whose judgment I much respected, that people would doubtless have in another world the company of such as they preferred in this. I was greatly encouraged by this thought; for I certainly knew that here I loved Christian society best. Thus, through the rich grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, I obtained such a victory over the temptation as, in a great measure, to secure a stable peace; notwithstanding, even to this day, which is more than fifty years, the impressions of that night will at times distress me.

"In reflection upon this trial, I have often been led to remark that God has brought from it signal good to others in my ministry. During those seasons of revival which were so richly experienced here, I had frequent occasion to scrutinize the workings of the depraved heart, and detect in others the various deceptive windings of sin, and pride, and unbelief, with which I had become familiar in my own exercises. It was thus of much service to me in helping young converts to settle upon a right foundation, and preventing deceived souls and hypocrites from taking shelter in some refuge of lies. After service one Sabbath, an

honest, sincere soul came to me and said, 'You have taken away to-day all the hope I have that I am a Christian.' I replied, My dear young friend, if you have no better hope than that, the sooner you are rid of it the better. A Christian's hope is based on Jesus Christ and sustained by the truth; therefore the ministry of the Gospel will not harm it, but strengthen it. Go to your home now; take your Bible and enter your closet, and let this question be settled between God and your soul. This issued in a most blessed state of confidence in Christ, which was attained very soon after. Again, when a disposition was manifested among young converts to enter the church, I would take occasion to bring before them the solemnity and importance of such a relation, showing the awful condition of a soul there, if mistaken in the foundation of its hope; because, having obtained fellowship with the church as a Christian, there was imminent danger of slumbering over its true state, to its eternal destruction. This course, while it put them upon great self-examination respecting their own case, also tended to elevate the character of the church, both in their estimation and in the eyes of the world; fixing the impression upon every mind that there could be no possible good resulting from a connection with it as members,

unless the Spirit of Christ reigned within the heart."

This narrative has anticipated, in the order of time, much that is now to follow, but it was deemed best to present the remarkable exercise here related, with its effects at one view. The reader will, therefore, return to the scenes of revival in Mansfield.

The spiritual despondency occasioned by the painful impressions of this dream was not allowed to interfere with the discharge of Christian duties. Settled firmly in the principle that, however it might please God to dispose of him at last, though his portion should be assigned among the lost, as he felt it might justly be, it was still his solemn duty to devote himself, with every faculty of his soul, to the service of God; he continued to fill the position of an active Christian, earnestly engaged in the work of religion and the scenes of stirring spiritual interest around him. He saw many others pass from the agonies of conviction and despair into the blessedness of pardon and hope. The songs of praise from new-born souls were continually sounding in his ears, and revived saints who had long been walking in darkness, filled now with clearer and richer anticipations of entering the presence of God, spake of joys unutterable

and full of glory. But the shades of death hung with dark and portentous gloom over the future before him. There was to his ear a holy melody in the praises of God, while yet he anticipated, with awful dread, an eternity amidst wailing and gnashing of teeth. His soul joined with heavenly fervor in the supplications which rose to Him "within the veil," and longed for that hope of the children of God which is fastened there upon the eternal throne; but fear still drove him as an outcast even from the mercy-seat. He loved the companionship of the saints far above all worldly associations, and it was the prospect of being separated forever from their holy society and mingling with the wicked, which formed the chief ingredient in his prospective cup of misery. Like good Mr. Fearing, whose character is described with such graphic power in the Pilgrim's Progress, he never thought of turning back to the world. The paths of sin had lost their attraction. "Difficulties, lions, or Vanity Fair, he feared not at all; it was only sin, death, and hell, that were to him a terror, because he had doubts about his interest in that celestial country."

He was baptized on the first Sabbath in February, 1800, and united with the Baptist church in Hampton, Conn.,—then under the pastoral care

of Rev. Abel Palmer. This step was taken, as he remarked, only "after strong conflicts of mind, much self-examination, and fervent prayer and wrestlings with God for direction."

CHAPTER IV.

ENTRANCE ON THE MINISTRY.

Mr. Bennett was united in marriage with Miss Rhoda Grow, a daughter of Deacon Thomas Grow, of Hampton, in November, 1802.

A general spirit of emigration was beginning at that time to prevail in New England, and its course turned mainly towards Central and Western New York. That region was then "the West," and much of it which is filled now with an active, intelligent population, and covered with the productions of industry and art, was an unbroken wilderness. Nearly all the cities west of Albany, whose streets are at this day thronged with a busy populace and lined with the mansions of opulence and refinement, were then unbuilt. No steamboat had yet plied upon the waters of the Hudson,

or disturbed the quiet of the Indian in his hunting grounds upon the lakes; and the most enthusiastic imagination had not conceived the magnificent palaces which now float there. The iron horses which fly through the length and breadth of that country, and the canals bearing upon their bosoms the wealth of a nation, had not once entered the thought of man. But the emigrant, with his ox-team, conveying the whole of his earthly possessions, might be seen threading his way slowly through the wilderness, directed often only by marked trees to the place of his destination. Here and there a log cabin, with a small clearing around it, gave indications of the hand of industry and civilization; while a tavern and a rudely constructed school-house, which served also for a church, formed the nucleus of some future village. The hardy adventurer here contended with the forests for subsistence; and in much privation, with vigorous arm secured for himself a habitation and an earthly competence.

Many of these emigrants were from the best families of New England. They brought with them, in frequent instances, the religious fruits and elevated morality which characterized the home of their fathers. The institutions of religion were immediately established among them. Often

was the family found, remote from other dwellings, gathered morning and evening around the domestic altar; while on the Sabbath, the neighbors for miles round, coming through the forests to some appointed place, would assemble for praise and prayer. Sermons they seldom had, except when read by some of their number from the printed volume; but their prayers went up no less fervently before the throne, and the earnest exhortation fell with the greater sweetness upon the soul. Not a few are the villages and towns in Central New York on which the godly principles and moral habits of these early settlers have left a holy impress that is not yet effaced: the order, intelligence, and piety still apparent are a sacred legacy which their children now enjoy.

Mr. Bennett became a resident of the town of Homer, Cortland (then Onondaga) Co., N. Y., in February, 1803.

That region was then comparatively a wilderness. The first family had taken up its residence there in 1793; and in the following year, being joined by a few others, mostly religious people, from Connecticut and Massachusetts, meetings for prayer and exhortation were established, in which all united. Churches, however, were subsequently formed. When Mr. Bennett arrived, no

house of worship had been built; the Baptist church, which was the first organized in the town of any denomination, worshipped in private dwellings, and the Congregational church met in the only framed building in the village (with one exception), which was also used as a town and school house. Here he began life as a farmer, in a log-house, with the forests around him to be felled by his own arm.

The little Baptist church, with which he united in April, 1804, was subjected to much trial in its early history. It was rarely they enjoyed the ministry of the Word; and, with few experienced members, widely scattered and exposed to all the temptation as well as privation of a new country, it may well be supposed that, though gifted with some of the excellent of the earth, there were some also whom Satan would lead astray. In a letter directed to his brother Alvin, dated Homer, Sept. 2, 1804, are the following remarks:

"I am exceedingly happy to learn that God has deigned to visit you in that country and display some of His glorious perfections; that the cries of the wounded and the shouts of those who sing for joy have been heard among you. O that I could say that this is the case here! But, alas, quite the contrary. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many,

who appeared to be zealous advocates of Jesus, grows cold; some deserting the cause, others halting between two opinions. Infidelity rears its head, and what Truth calls damnable heresies are fast creeping in among us. As a people, we are—I had like to have said, on the eve of destruction. But I recall it; for the foundation standeth sure. For God the Omnipotent Lord is at the helm of government, and He cometh upon princes as upon mortar and as the potter kneadeth clay, smiling at the weak efforts of sin and the powers of darkness to oppose Him. For of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end."

The country was then in almost primitive wildness. Dense forests extended over large tracts, as yet unbroken by the hand of civilization, from whose recesses the bear and the fox often issued, and made depredations in the barnyards of the scattered settlers. Amusing incidents are handed down of the warfare between the early pioneers and the wild animals which prowled around their habitations. On one occasion, it is related, a huge bear having come out at nightfall from a neighboring thicket and carried off a large hog, Mr. Bennett hearing the alarm hastily took his gun and went in chase. It was loaded only with buck-

shot, and having no balls at hand he thrust the ramrod into the barrel as a substitute. The bear, finding itself pursued, turned and showed a disposition to do battle for his prey. His pursuer fired, and the ramrod passing directly through the animal was lost in the ground. The beast fell lifeless and was borne home in triumph by the victor. Circumstances of this character were not uncommon, but this will suffice to illustrate the condition of the country at that period.

Mr. Bennett entertained the thought of entering the ministry with great reluctance; not from any personal aversion to it, but from a painful sense of his deficiency in Christian attainment and literary culture. He had received nothing more than the mere rudiments of an English education, and, devoid of scholastic accomplishments and mental discipline, and compelled to rely upon the labor of his hands for temporal support, he must be thrown in his pulpit efforts solely upon the native vigor of his intellect and the teachings of the Spirit of God. It was only after nearly two years of severe mental conflict, he yielded to his convictions of duty and became a public minister of the Gospel.

The Baptists were then few and feeble. Ecclesiastical oppression in New England, which sought

to crush them, had not yet ceased. With few learned men in the ministry and little control of the press, the great truths for which they are distinguished were imperfectly understood and widely misrepresented. The vital principle of religious liberty, for which they had struggled almost alone for many centuries, though it was now inscribed upon the national constitution and was rapidly effacing from the statute book enactments which invaded the freedom of conscience, had not yet thoroughly imbued the minds of even good men; and many were the annoyances and persecutions to which at that time persons were often subjected who ventured to unite with them. It was not unfrequent that the public avowal of their obnoxious tenets involved the confessor in general odium, the loss of personal friendships, and even the dissolution of family ties. The early annals of nearly all the churches in this country present constant illustrations of the intolerance and bigotry experienced at the hands of men endowed with many excellencies of religious character, but professing a different ecclesiastical faith. Under such circumstances, the position of a minister, it may well be supposed, was one in nowise to be coveted either for its ease, its popularity, or its emoluments; and the men who entered upon it were

ordinarily impelled by an ardent love of souls and convictions wrought within them by the Spirit of God which they could not resist.

The exercises through which his mind passed in reference to entering the ministry, he related to his pastor before his death nearly in the following words:

"The work of the ministry had peculiar attractions for me, even in the most thoughtless and wildest period of my youth. It would often rise in my mind, O that I could have been a minister! I cared not who obtained political distinction, or wealth, or worldly honor, so I could have preached the Gospel. But this was impossible, as the Congregational church in which I was reared allowed none to be put into that office except such as had enjoyed collegiate advantages. Yet for my own amusement I would often on the Sabbath, when the preacher had read his text and was making some preliminary remarks, take the subject and spread it out and arrange it for discussion. Sometimes I found myself very happily agreeing with him in the arrangement, at others, I at once saw my mistake in making the division, as he opened it; and then again, I would say, Now Rev. sir, you have not got that subject right; you cannot preach so.

"After I had obtained hope in Christ, my mind still much desired the work of the ministry; for interests now appeared associated with it which were spiritual and eternal. But it still seemed impossible for me to attain to it; the work appeared so holy, and I looked so vile in my own eyes, that it forbid my ever reaching it; I therefore dismissed the matter from my mind, as useless to think of, was married, and removed to Homer, and locating myself as a citizen, engaged in subduing the forests and tilling the soil for my support. My course, I supposed, was fixed for life; and lest impressions in relation to the ministry should again interrupt me I resolved on my first coming into the town to take no part in religious services, but live in quiet, endeavoring to maintain a fair religious character. It so fell out, however, that soon after, in attending meeting with the little Baptist church in the village, there were only a very few persons present, and I was called to take part in the service and offer prayer. I objected, but the good sister who called on me so reasoned the matter that conviction fastened on my mind, and before the season closed I was again happy in the discharge of duty. After this I was expected to take part with my brethren in reading the Scriptures, exhortation, and prayer on the Sab-

bath, as there was then little preaching, and sermons were few and far between.

"For a time my mind was satisfied. At length the suggestion came upon me: *With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?* I would repel it, but again it would return: *With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?* And it would be renewed with increasing force, as if some one spoke behind me, so that I would instinctively turn my head: *With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?* I would still reply, God has a little flock here and I would gladly feed them, but I cannot; I have nothing for them. And this was repeated perhaps a hundred times, and often ten times a day it would come bursting into my mind till my attention was completely absorbed. Also in my musings, the state of sinners around would arrest my thought. The people were coming from the East, invited by the pleasantness of the situation, the fertility of the soil, and the prospects of gain; but as money was the great object, they were engrossed with the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things. I said, Surely they will lose their souls unless there be one to warn them of danger and direct them to Jesus the friend of sinners. But I have no influence; they would

not believe me. Should I attempt to warn them they might say, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* The work is too great; I cannot perform it. One day, while reflecting on the state of the people and the prospects of the church, the thought rushed upon my mind with great force, You will yet have to preach. At this my heart strongly revolted. I thought, God knows that I wished to be a minister, and should have felt honored to be introduced into that work under circumstances which would have enabled me to rise to a mediocrity of standing in it. But with my limited education, no schools to improve my mind, no elder ministers to counsel me, no library; let me do the best I can under all these embarrassments here in the wilderness, I shall be nothing more than a miserable, insignificant preacher; and I will not. Lord, I am willing to exhort, or pray, or devote my time otherwise to aid the little church, as a brother; but I can go no further. The subject, however, could not be thus thrown off. I durst not pray God to show me my duty for fear He would show me the ministry. Having then no other books in the house but a Bible, a volume of hymns, and a spelling-book, I said, I do not know any thing, nor have I any means of knowing except from the Bible. And to this I betook myself with great

ardor: I read much by night and by day, as I had opportunity; I would carry it about my person to my labor; while chopping down the forest I would work a while, then sit down upon a log and read a while, and pray a while, and weep a while; then to my labor again. I begged God to forgive me if I had done wrong in refusing to consider the subject; and yet was wholly unwilling to entertain the matter under my circumstances.

"Thus my mind was troubled for nearly two years, supposing that my trials were wholly unknown to others. At length, to my surprise, I found many had the impression that I was exercised respecting that duty; and they took occasion to suggest the matter to me, urging me to consider it favorably. Also, as we had no pastor, opportunity offered to speak with a little latitude upon the Scriptures, which would occasionally afford me great satisfaction in my feelings. At other times, for fear it might be looking towards the ministry, the very point I wished to discuss I dared not touch; and after speaking of every thing else I could think of but that which really filled my mind, I would sit down, full of confusion and covered with mortification. Thus weighed down with continual conflict, my flesh wasted and I became almost a skeleton; and by degrees one

objection after another was providentially removed. I knew I had the approbation of my brethren; they were more than willing I should preach.

"In the spring of 1805, I became exceedingly anxious to converse with my honored father, and Rev. Mr. Palmer, my former pastor; for I felt sure that Mr. Palmer was called of God to preach the Gospel, and I had been told my father once thought he ought to preach, but never did. Therefore I thought, if I could only see them, between them both, I am sure I could ascertain whether my exercises are to be encouraged or not. But to see them seemed impossible; for they were living some three hundred miles distant, and knew nothing of my feelings, as I supposed; I had not the remotest thought that they would come to me; and I was wholly unable to make the journey. My location was in a small opening in the forests, and it was necessary to labor constantly to obtain sustenance for my family. One day, while at work, looking up, I saw my father coming; I was filled with joy at the sight of him; but my emaciated, haggard appearance so affected him that he burst into tears and wept profusely. After inquiring after my welfare and the causes of my wasted appearance, to which I replied by saying that I was

not unhappily situated; brushing away the tears, he remarked, 'Well, I am glad if you are enjoying life; come, Mr. Palmer is down at the house.' This filled me with astonishment; it seemed to be of God; and I could not but regard it as a special Providence manifesting His condescension towards me. It seemed their journey was suddenly planned and prosecuted, and I could interpret it only as showing the design of God to give me every evidence I could ask. Before they left I was satisfied respecting the real character of my exercises. The last refuge under which I had hid myself was now taken away; I stood out all exposed to guilt if I did not discharge the duty which was now plainly before me; I therefore resolved to make one effort.

"I honestly supposed it would be needful to make but one attempt, in preaching, to satisfy my brethren and my own feelings forever, that it was not my duty. I made engagement in my mind, if life was continued to me till such a Sabbath, when the church would be together more generally, that I would make the effort. Accordingly, I selected a text, not suspecting that I should ever need another one; it was Eph. v. 8. *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of the light.* This, I thought, would afford me opportunity to exercise

my gift in the ministry, if any in the Bible could; for it seemed to allude to our depraved condition in nature by the 'darkness' spoken of; and to the blessed and hopeful condition of the Christian under the figure of 'light in the Lord;' of both which I thought I had some knowledge in my own experience, and could therefore make out some interesting discourse from them. If not, and my mind was not fruitful, I could fall back upon the last clause, 'Walk as children of the light,' which would bring me upon ground with which I was familiar, having long been permitted to exhort my brethren. With this plan, I conned the subject, and adjusted my thoughts, and, at the time appointed, went to the meeting, confident that if it was my duty to preach I should be sustained in that service. The chapter having been read, at the proper time I rose and remarked that, as the brethren well knew, my mind had been much exercised in respect to the duty of preaching the Gospel; and I had, therefore, concluded to venture forward, leaving it to God and my brethren, until they bade me stop. Then, reading the text, I commenced an exposition of it. But the pride of my heart deceived me; the fear of man brought a snare. I lost my arrangement, became confused in my thoughts, and exceedingly mortified in the

issue of the effort. Dismissing the meeting for an hour, I went into the forest, threw myself down, and wept bitterly. I prayed God to forgive me for having had a thought that I could preach. But at length the suggestion rose that the time for meeting was come again. My first impression was not to return: I thought I could not appear in that congregation again. Then the thought came that I was a professor of religion, and my conduct, should I desert the meeting, might wound the cause; and this I could not bear. On rising up to return, something said, 'Are you going to preach again this afternoon?' Preach! No, indeed, I am not. I am ashamed of this morning's work; I shall not try that again. Then it came to me that I had stated in the morning I would go forward, leaving it to God and my brethren; they had not bid me stop, and I stood under public engagement to continue preaching. I was sorry I had said it, but, being said, I felt under obligation to make another effort. Then arose the question of a subject. What shall be the text? Oh! thought I, may God have mercy upon me! I am a fool! For, going by the way, my wisdom has failed me, and my folly must be apparent to all the people. Having enjoyed many sweet reflections upon different passages of Scripture, during

the preceding two years, I thought I must select some one of them and do the best I could with it. My mind went through the Scriptures with great rapidity, but could light on no passage, nor catch one ray of light from any part of the Bible, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. I became much excited, and trembling and groaning in spirit, set out for the house, which was only a few rods distant. Suddenly, these words fell upon my mind with great power and sweetness: *My kingdom is not of this world.* I put them from me, as not having been investigated. But they rushed again upon my mind with force, and upon the repetition of them the third time, just as I reached the door, there seemed some light to spring up in my mind. There was no alternative but to read these words; I had no other subject. Accordingly, the meeting was opened, and I read them as the foundation of discourse. I had not proceeded far, when light broke in upon my mind, astonishing my whole soul, as the sun would break forth in its full-orbed glory on the slumbering darkness of midnight. That kingdom and its King—its laws and order, its principles and its precepts, its promises and pleasures, its power and prospects, its subjects and objects, its life-giving influence on the sinner in this dying world, and

its consummation in glory—all burst upon my mind with such intense interest and expansion of thought, that I said to myself, I shall never need another text. If I am permitted to live till three score years and ten, this contains all the matter I need to preach about; it can never be exhausted. My heart was in sweet composure, overflowing with joy. I preached and wept; the people wept and listened. I only wondered we had never seen such beauty before in the Saviour and in the Gospel, and before I closed, I thought, if my brethren would let me, I would preach as long as I lived. And this I may honestly now say, being seventy years old, by the mercy of God being kept, I have been permitted to have a place in the ministry, and that text I have found containing more than I have been able to preach, occupying my whole attention up to this time. Still there are heights in it which have not been scaled, and depths which have not been fathomed, and extents and measurements which have never been compassed.

"This experience was a lesson of rich instruction, leading me to distinguish between exercises merely intellectual in the ministry of the Gospel, and those which are truly spiritual; and however important the former are—and a man must study to show himself approved—still from the latter he

derives his sweetest personal enjoyments and only effective power in the work."

Having thus been introduced to the work of the ministry, he continued to preach with increased acceptance to the little church gathered in Homer. In November of 1805, he was unanimously licensed to preach the Gospel anywhere within the bounds of the church; and in April of the following year, this license was made unlimited, and he was authorized to proclaim the tidings of life in Christ Jesus "wherever God in His providence should open the door." In February, 1807, the church, by solemn resolution, called him to ordination, which took place publicly, June 18, in the same year. The services of the occasion were conducted in a large barn, then new, on the premises of Hon. John Keep, now connected with the County Poor House. Rev. Ashbel Hosmer, pastor of the Baptist church, Hamilton, preached the sermon, from Gal. i. 10–12. Delegates were present from the following churches: First Church, Milton (now Genoa), Lisle, Dryden, Locke, Cazenovia, and Fabius. Thus, with trembling hope, he was solemnly consecrated to the pastor's work, and put in charge with the feeble church in Homer, which, under his pastorship, was yet destined to rise a monument of his faithfulness and the rich grace of God.

CHAPTER V.

PASTORAL LABORS.

Many embarrassments attended his earlier labors as a pastor. Without the advantages of education, without access to an extensive library, his discourses must necessarily be devoid of any of the attractions of learning or the graces of rhetoric; though the natural vigor of his mind gave to them great power, and studied, as they often were, upon his knees with the Bible before him, they were usually rich in biblical expression and illustration, and attended with an unction imparted only by the Holy Ghost. The church had no house of worship, and were accustomed to assemble on the Sabbath at different places in the town, which much affected the permanency of the congregation. Widely scattered over a region twenty miles in extent, it was not easy to gather the flock into one assembly, or discharge faithfully to them, in counsel and visitation, the duties of a pastor. Valuable additions had, indeed, been made to their number, of some who in after life stood as distinguished pillars in the church, but there were others also who occasioned the watchful servant of

God much anxiety. Added to these, was the limited amount of his salary, which compelled him to labor much with his hands for temporal support. The extract which follows, from a letter addressed to his brother Alvin, August 18, 1809, furnishes an interesting view of his trials and character at this period:

"As to the situation of my mind in the things of religion—sometimes the clusters from Eschol's brook cheer my fainting soul. The same truth I try to preach to others is the only support of my soul; for all my dependence is on sovereign grace. However, much of my time is spent in trials. I have trials about my adoption, trials about preaching, trials about my worldly concerns, trials about my stupid manner of living, trials about the disorderly walk of some members in the church, and trials arising from temptations numberless as the sands. I hope you have fewer discouragements to encounter. Pray, be encouraged, my brother,

> "For the weakest, Jesus shall win the day,
> Though death and hell obstruct the way."

Let us not seek to please men; for such are not the servants of Christ. Seek not the favor of parties, but of Christians. *Do the work of an evangelist; make full proof of thy ministry.*"

At this early period, some of the pastors were wont to devote a part of almost every year to missionary effort, itinerating in the new settlements forming west of them. By this means the scattered members of the fold of Christ were collected, and churches organized; while the Gospel was published to many who would otherwise have been left uninstructed. Meetings for prayer were set up and encouraged, and the influences of religion spread where they were before unfelt. The ardent missionary zeal of many of the fathers in the ministry, some of whom have already entered their rest and others are now waiting the Master's call, is still fresh in the memory of the elder members of the churches, among whom not a few listened to the Word of Life they ministered, and then first felt its saving power. Allusion is made to a tour of this character in a letter written September 18, 1810. It contains the following remarks: "The things of religion are not so much engaging my mind as they ought. I have to write bitter things against myself; yet by the grace of God I am what I am. I expect, the Lord willing, to leave my family next Monday on a journey of seven or eight weeks to the westward, the most of it to be spent in missionary labors by appointment from the Hamilton Baptist Mission-

ary Society. Our church enjoys comfortable union: I think there are some prospects of a reformation. The Lord grant I may not be deceived. Last Lord's day I baptized one; our present number is seventy-eight. The Lord add more by His grace."

Another tour of similar character was undertaken to Holland Purchase, in 1811, during which, in an absence of a little more than seven weeks, it is recorded, he rode five hundred miles, and preached fifty-seven sermons.

Religious discussions at this period turned mainly upon the points at issue between the Calvinistic and Arminian theology. Many good men even took extreme views. Some denied the sovereignty of Divine grace in conversion, and made salvation wholly the result of the sinner's strivings. On the other hand, there were not a few who, forgetting that the Most High, in working all things according to the counsels of His own will, effects His gracious purposes by appointed means, refused to exhort men to repent and believe, on the ground of man's natural incapacity, and boldly taught that men were under no moral obligation respecting such spiritual exercises except they received special grace from God, in which case they would become Christians, whether exhorted or not. In such a ministry, the more mysterious and awful

truths of God's Word would sometimes be set forth with extraordinary power, and the saints filled with adoring wonder in view of the riches of grace abounding in distinguishing, eternal love; but upon the ear of the sinner no words of expostulation and entreaty fell, and no heavenly invitations called him from the paths of sin and danger to the refuge in Jesus Christ. Of these opposing parties, the former, from the acknowledged fact of our moral agency, inferred the necessary existence in the sinner of moral ability to perform the spiritual acts required in the Gospel, thus overlooking the blinding and depraving effect of sin: the latter, from the equally well established fact of the sovereignty of God, deduced the consequence, that the soul is passive in conversion and the sinner under no obligation to make effort for salvation, except an intimation of the Divine intention to save was first given by special influences of the Holy Spirit. The controversy upon this subject was rife, both in this country and in England, eliciting warm and often angry disputation; and while Andrew Fuller, in Europe, was dealing sturdy blows on either side against these extreme opinions, and marking out that middle ground in theology which receives both the facts, but rejects both the inferences, the most godly and influential

in the ministry on this side the Atlantic, though with much contention, occupied the same position. The following extract from a letter of Mr. Bennett, directed to his brother, August 18, 1811, will be read with interest, as indicating his doctrinal tendencies at this period. It was in answer to one requesting his opinion as to the proper position to be taken between the Antinomian and Arminian doctrines.

"Dear Brother: Christ and His apostles preached a doctrine between them. Search the Scriptures. We find there the Divine sovereignty, particular and eternal election, justification by grace, the perseverance of saints, man's moral agency and accountability, and the eternal punishment of the wicked, all clearly supported by Divine truth; and though it may be impossible for us to reconcile these together, we may yet tell the world of them. We may declare that God is sufficient to defend the truth, and will at the last make it plain. We ought to be willing to become fools for Christ's sake. It is beyond our reach to make the natural man understand the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him."

With such views the ministry of Mr. Bennett was one of untiring activity. Depending only on the grace of God, he wrought with a holy energy

which was inspired by love to Christ and love to souls, and a just sense of the freeness and richness of the Gospel. In the log houses of his people his friendly counsel and ardent prayers were frequently enjoyed. In the conduct of meetings for prayer and conference he was especially gifted; and in the familiar neighborhood gatherings, which were then so common, his presence always seemed to increase the freedom felt in experimental religious conversation. And from the pulpit he set forth, with godly fervor, the lost condition of the sinner, the obligation of immediate repentance and faith, and the necessity of holy living; not, indeed, as the ground of justification before God, but as the legitimate result and essential evidence of it. The church, gradually augmented in number and strengthened by a stated ministry, at length reared a house of worship, located about a mile and a half south of the village of Homer, which was dedicated to the service of God in June 1812. The text from which the pastor preached on this occasion was from Zeph. iii. 12: *I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord;* and though it was a day of much gladness to him, the subject well illustrates the outward circumstances of the people.

But God was about to manifest His grace in the work of conversion. An increased fervency of spirit appeared in the church, and meetings for religious conversation were much multiplied. Brief notes in a diary he kept during this period give indications that his own soul also was more than ordinarily awakened to the condition of the lost around him. In an historical discourse preached in 1844, he thus alludes to the revival which followed:

"The commencement of this period found the church worshipping in the new meeting-house, which had brought them into debt about one thousand dollars, or nearly half the value of the house, without any means of payment. However, such was the abundant grace bestowed, that before the year closed the church had more than doubled her numbers, the debt was paid off, and the congregation large and respectable. In this revival there were eighteen husbands, with their wives, and thirteen whose companions were members before, making forty-nine heads of families, who were permanently settled in town, and respectable in society, converted to God and brought into the church, many of whom remain at this present time as pillars in the house of God, but some have fallen asleep. Such was the feeling

cultivated, the amount of intelligence possessed, the deliberation, integrity, and decision with which they came forward and connected with the church, that there seemed no occasion for change, or even a desire to turn back again to the world. It is believed that for one or two years after the close of the revival there was not an instance of defection in any member sufficient to call for even a reproof from the church.

"In those days the Scripture was fulfilled in them: 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord and thought upon His name.' God did remember them, and blessed their souls and prospered the work of their hands. The opportunities, time afforded before or between hours of divine worship on the Sabbath, were profitably spent by an interchange of Christian feeling, and a kind inquiry after the state of soul of the individual, or of the progress of the cause in their immediate neighborhood: thus in some measure making each member responsible for the state of religious feeling among their neighbors. But this was not enough; the church as a body agreed to assemble at the meeting-house (when, at the time of which we are now speaking, there were

not probably five members within one mile of it) once in two weeks, and spend half a day in prayer and social Christian conversation together as members of the same body and partakers of the same rich grace. These social conference meetings gave opportunity for the exercise of the various gifts in the church, which God has given that all may be edified and comforted. They served to bring out occasionally those pious and sage remarks which are *like apples of gold in pictures of silver.*

"We give a few specimens. On one occasion the conversation turned on the meaning and importance of our Lord's words: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' A member said, How shall we understand when an act comes within the range of His approbation? how shall we know when we do a *good* work? A sister replied, I do not know, unless we can do the work and *forget* it. The righteous had done all their good works and forgot them, for they had done them out of love to Christ; but the wicked had done theirs and remembered them, for they expected *pay* for them. On one of those conference days, another sister addressed those present in the following strain: Brethren and sisters, let us *trust God.* It is not so easy to trust the bare word of God, but it

is our duty. He says, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, and it ought to satisfy us. Now, she continued, we can trust God with our barns full, cellars full, and hands full; but to trust Him when destitute, when *want* presses, when no prospect of relief appears,—to trust Him 'although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, and the flocks shall be cut off from the folds, and there shall be no herd in the stalls'—to trust Him thus, is *religion;* this is what God requires of His children. And when Christ is enjoyed *alone* and has no rival in our heart, and we live on Him by *faith*, and eat His flesh and drink His blood, 'tis then we enjoy peace; this is health to the soul, *this is sweet living.*

"A brother who was a large farmer, and yet was seldom absent from any week-day meeting appointed by the church, being asked how he could be so constant at meetings, replied, These meetings are appointed by the church, and it is my duty to be here; I am bound to respect the claims of the church. It is presumed, said he, the church would not make an appointment unless it were important, and if it is important for the church to meet, it is necessary for me to be there, as I am one of the

church. May the Spirit of the living God impress this truth, this important, this *immensely important* practical truth upon every church member's heart, that it may enlighten the conscience and result in a punctual attendance on the appointments of the church."

Of those who professed godliness during this revival, ninety-two were added to the church, and among them the middle-aged were the most numerous. The steadfastness of the converts and the increased union and heavenly-mindedness among the saints, continuing in their midst a sweet and holy influence for several years, are facts worthy of special remark. They attest the excellence of the measures then employed in the work of God. The truths preached were the simple doctrines of the cross. "The holiness of Jehovah's character," he says, "the depravity of human nature, the eternal love of God, the benevolence of the Saviour, the fulness of the atonement, salvation by grace, the subject of death, the judgment to come, and the eternity of future rewards and punishments, were the common topics in conversation and exhortation among the people." No hasty zeal seems to have sought increase of numbers by lowering the standard of godliness; on the contrary, when persons were about to relate their

exercises with reference to baptism, it was customary for the pastor or some of the elder brethren to remind the church of the solemn responsibility they incurred in encouraging the hopes of a candidate respecting acceptance with God, and set before them the fearful consequences to the individual and the church, should there be mistake upon this vital point. Nearly two years after this revival, he wrote to a friend: "You are not unacquainted with the work of grace among us in years past. The fruit of it is still manifest. There is a remarkable establishment of mind in the converts; but one has been laid under admonition as yet, and the whole church appears in lovely union.

While attending an ecclesiastical council in Pharsalia, it pleased the Lord to visit him with severe illness. He was seized with a fever then prevalent, which after his return home seriously threatened his life. In reference to this he thus wrote in his journal:

"*May* 25.—It is fifteen years this day, since, I trust, Jesus delivered my soul. I thought it would be my dying day, but God preserved my life. Thanks be to His holy name! my mind has enjoyed some peace."

In a few weeks he was again engaged in his

work with wonted vigor and success. This year he closed with the following minute in his journal:

"Thus ends the year 1813—a period marked with great love from God to Zion, in the numerous revivals which have occurred and the great peace of the churches; and with wrath towards his enemies, in the wars and pestilences which have visited the nations. My soul, let thanksgivings abound to God for His goodness in continuing my life and family, and above all in prospering the dear people with whom I labor, by preserving the peace and fellowship of the church, and disposing the congregation to continue their attention in the house of God: so let it be. Amen."

During the summer of 1814, under direction of the Hamilton Baptist Missionary Society, he performed a tour of six weeks among the destitute in the counties of Tioga, Steuben, and Alleghany, in reference to which he remarks:

"I passed through a very needy part of the land. Little do those who always enjoy preaching, appreciate their own good situation, or the miserable condition of others deprived of such a blessing. My mind was employed very agreeably for the most part, enjoying some degree of freedom in meditation and communication. I felt something

of the spirit of the work, through the blessing of God. I made use of a new subject every time, which kept my thoughts occupied in chase after heavenly instruction that might feed the hungry saint and awaken the poor sinner to see himself lost and Jesus lovely. It was to me a most interesting season, and I trust, also, to many of God's dear children." In this excursion he preached forty-one sermons, and rode about 500 miles.

A letter addressed to his brother, Rev. Alvin Bennett, February, 1815, exhibits the tenderness of his fraternal affection, as well as the religious exercises of this period:

"Far distant as I am from you in body, I still feel the drawing of those ties which, beginning in nature, have grown in strength by fellowship in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. I often recall in memory those pleasurable days we once enjoyed in each other's society, and ask myself, Are they never to return again? God, the adorable friend of sinful man, hath disposed of us as He saw fit; and we ought to feel submission. But my unruly heart often betrays me into the enemy's hand, and there how am I handled! Surely,

'Sin's promised joys are turned to pain,
And I am drowned with grief
Till my dear Lord return again.'

What infinite mercy is it to poor sinners that we have such a Saviour, who saves the worst, cleanses the foulest, and does it all freely, without merit *in* us or reward *from* us! Here is all my hope."

A portion of another to the same in a season of affliction, August, 1815, will further illustrate his character at this period:

> "'Through tribulation deep
> The way to glory lies'—

and is not rest sweet to the laboring man? What then will Heaven be to the saints after this dreary life is over? I long to see you, my brother, and your dear wife, but God knows what is best. You are not forgotten in our prayers, and I hope you share largely in the Divine blessing upon the soul, by which you can say that the pleasure overcomes the pain. I am glad to hear that you have employment in the Lord's vineyard; for I have no good opinion of indolent servants. Oh, for grace to be humble and faithful, till death draws nigh to discharge us from all our toil, and that sin which so disturbs our peace in this world! Our church are in good harmony and fellowship at present. There are some additions; but we need another reformation among us to make 'the spices flow out.'"

This year terminates with the following brief record in his diary:

"*December* 31.—Thus closes the year 1815. And why is my life spared? For what does God continue me, but to witness His goodness and be useful in His cause? Thanks be to His holy name! I am partaker of His love in my soul, and experience His favor in my family; but, above all, I would praise Him for the salvation of sinners around me, and the prosperity of the church of which He has given me the oversight."

CHAPTER VI.

REVIVALS.

"Oh, that this year may be peculiar for the enlargement of Zion, both in the increase of converts and the spread of Gospel principles!" was the fervent prayer with which he begun the year 1816. Nor was his petition unanswered. A rich outpouring of the Holy Spirit was again experienced, cheering the pastor's heart and much enlarging and strengthening the church. A few notices of this will here be inserted from his journal:

"*February* 12, 13.—I spent these days with great pleasure in the east part of the town, preaching and visiting. The Lord is there, of a truth. Oh, that many may be converted!

"14.—A good day in conference at the meeting-house.

"18.—Lord's day. Preached, A. M., from Isa. xii. 1: P. M., a funeral sermon from Mark iv. 29. In the evening, attended a good conference meeting. The Lord, in His good pleasure, having seen fit to bless His people in this place again by the outpouring of His spirit, my heart has been so drawn to Him and His people, and my time so taken up from home, preaching and visiting, that I have neglected to continue my journal as usual.

"*March* 15.—Preached at Bro. Keep's, upon the importance of entering in 'at the strait gate,' and then baptized six. This day thought I felt something of the value of souls and the *necessity* of regeneration. Yet, oh my soul! what if thou at last art found without, among the 'many' that shall not 'be able to enter!' My God, pity my soul; forgive my sin. Make me *holy*, then shall I be *humble*, then shall I be *happy*.

"*March* 17.—Enjoyed a good season at the water and at the table of our Lord.

How condescending and how kind
Was God's eternal Son.'

It was *pity* brought Him down, and when here, what examples did He set! The institutions of the Gospel, how wisely adapted for the refreshment of the saints! Never can Jesus be praised enough for His unspeakable *mercy*.

"*April* 14.—I preached and administered the ordinances of God's house in the church of Christ at Dryden. It was a good day to many. Jesus unveiled His lovely face and gave His saints delight. The church there is surrounded with many enemies, and I found some freedom in preaching to them from this text: *These are they that have come up out of great tribulation.*"

A brief account of this revival is also given in the historical discourse before alluded to: it is as follows:

"In November, 1815, the truth ministered by the pastor, from Prov. xx. 4, *The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold, therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing*, though sown in weakness, was so blessed of God as to be the commencement of another season of refreshing, which continued with undiminished and delightful interest more than a year in the church and congregation, bringing many excellent and efficient mem-

bers into the church, whose prayers and piety are still useful to the world. There were very few days, for more than twelve months, in which a meeting was not holden somewhere in the town for religious worship. And during the whole summer, when meetings were held in the afternoon, so common was it for members of the church to attend, and even go miles to attend, that it became a common saying among the wicked, that there would be scarcity of provisions that year, for Christians did not work half their time. Afterwards it was as proverbial with the brethren, that they had seldom if ever had better crops, or had them gathered in better season, or in better state, than they were that year; showing most clearly that those who trust in God and do good, *dwell in the land and are fed.*"

It appears that more than a hundred were added to the church during the progress of this work of grace, of whose steadfastness in the Gospel, under the faithful watch-care of their pastor, the same cheering account is given as of those in the previous awakening. A letter to his brother Alvin, dated November 18, 1817, contains a view of his religious exercises at that period:

"Bro. Asa arrived at home the Saturday after he left your house, in good spirits and satisfied

with his journey and visit. He thinks it may be the last he shall ever make. Indeed, how important to act ever as if it was the *last* act; the *last* visit we shall ever make, when we call on friends; the *last* prayer we shall ever offer, when in the closet we reflect upon our own and others' wants, and supplicate God for help. Oh, that the *last* of time and the *length* of eternity lay with more sensible weight upon my spirits! Methinks it would greatly help me to seek the glory of God in all I do. I rejoice, my brother, that God has given you a privileged place in Zion, compared with many of our dear brethren in the ministry, but far more do I rejoice to learn of your firmness in the faith and usefulness in your lot. God grant you many souls as the fruit of your labor, and make you abundantly instrumental in furthering the work of righteousness and holiness among the dear people of your care, while you endure with much long-suffering the opposition of the wicked, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves to the truth, that God may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the salvation which is by grace, through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God."

Few experimental Christians are always on the mount of vision. The hill of Difficulty, the valley

of the Shadow of Death, and the Enchanted Ground, lie in the Christian's pilgrimage to the Celestial City. Bitter draughts must often be administered by the Great Physician in healing the soul's maladies and making us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:" nor is it unfrequent that remaining depravity is permitted to remind the Christian of his inherent weakness, and thus lead him to the Rock of refuge. And if we look upward to the throng now rejoicing in perfected love before the Throne, of them also is it true:

> "Once they were mourning here below,
> And bathed their couch with tears;
> They struggled hard as we do now
> With sins, and doubts, and fears."

A letter of May 13, 1818, contains the passage which is here inserted, giving an interesting view of his inward experience:

"*God was manifest in the flesh.* What a wonder is here! Angels see Him united to a race of beings below them, and that, too, a race of sinners. They desire to look into this mystery. God was *manifest* in the flesh; yea, more, He was *made flesh* and dwelt among us, and *we* beheld His glory. When I consider the stupendous grace of God to men, I am so lost in the amazing deep that

I can only exclaim, *It passeth knowledge!* Do you, my brother, ever find your thoughts so drawn out upon this subject as to be unable to express the views before you, there being a want in words to convey the feelings of the soul? It is pleasant dwelling on the mount where, with Moses, we may look eastward and westward, northward and southward, and still be in the boundless prospect lost. But I often meet much harm in getting down the hill, from unbelief on the one hand, and pride on the other. Those falls! they almost take my life. And then, also, I am sure to meet Apollyon. Many a time has he seemed to think himself sure of me. 'Tis grace that keeps my soul from first to last. Again, do you ever find yourself so stupid and dark as to see nothing in the glorious mystery of godliness, no beauty in Jesus Christ, no light in the Bible, no importance in truth, no delight in the saints, no value in souls, no difference in men, no virtue in yourself, no harm in sin? Feelings resembling these are to be dreaded more than the judgments of God.

> "Far more the treacherous calm I dread,
> Than tempests bursting o'er my head.'

I would hope that you are not compelled to groan, being burdened with such sinful propensities. I

think, however, of late I have felt more the weight of truth, and realized more fully the importance of walking with God. At some seasons, I have found enlargement of mind in prayer and in preaching the Word. Some have of late been called to hope in the mercy of God, but the revival is not yet extensive. There is a pleasing prospect of its increase, but the residue of the spirit is with the Lord. Oh pray for us, that saints may live to Christ, and sinners bow before Him."

The most powerful of the revivals which distinguished the ministry of Mr. Bennett, occurred in 1820. It seems to have been attended with remarkable manifestations of Divine power, affecting in a peculiar manner the whole town. Many who then first experienced hope in Christ are now pillars in the Church of God, and live to attest the pure and permanent character of this work of grace. Its general features cannot be described better than in the language of an article from Mr. Bennett's pen, published in the "Western New York Baptist Magazine," of 1821, and addressed to the editors, from which we make the following extract:

"In December, 1819, there were some symptoms of another gracious revival; the saints seemed more fervent in prayer, and there was a greater

solemnity visible in assemblies convened for public worship. There was also one instance of hopeful conversion, with one or two signal instances of reformation in backsliders. About the first of January, at a meeting of an ecclesiastical council in the Presbyterian church, the work broke forth in a more visible manner, with great power, extending into different parts of the town, engaging the attention of all classes in society. Many of the saints experienced great enlargement of mind, and entered into the work with all their souls. Some who had made a profession of religion for many years, under serious apprehension that they had built upon the sand, were brought to great searchings of heart, and at length gave account of their views of the Saviour with such transports of joy, as resembled the day of their espousals. It was hardly possible to find a person in the place unaffected; all seemed to be moved.

"Meetings became unusually crowded, even in the largest places devoted to conferences; and the houses of God upon the Sabbath were filled with numbers assembled to hear the Gospel of Christ, and an indescribable solemnity was visible among the people. The language of the oldest persons and most experienced saints among us was, We never saw it on this wise before. For two or three

weeks the cloud seemed to hang over us without distilling its contents. This was a time when much feeling, and, I trust, much faith was exercised in prayer. At length the cloud seemed to burst, diffusing blessings all around; the saints could now say, *the joy of the Lord is our strength*, while converts daily appeared in the assemblies of the saints compassing God's altar with songs of deliverance. In one neighborhood on East River, sixteen souls hopefully experienced the forgiveness of sins in one week, within the compass of a mile; and 'young men and maidens, old men and children,' united in praising the Lord. There was very little secular labor performed for two or three months, and many devoted the whole of their time to meetings and visiting from house to house. Some went two and two (as our Lord sent forth His disciples), through different parts of the town, calling upon every family on their way, endeavoring to do them good in their conversation and prayers with them. And, no doubt, this was one great means in the hand of God, in extending the work.

"The first that united with the church were baptized the third Sabbath in February. On that day, there were thirteen baptized, ten of whom were young men in single life, who followed each

other in succession in the ordinance, in the presence of a large and deeply affected assembly. From that time, during the spring and summer, scarcely a Sabbath passed without waiting upon some in this institution of God. The whole number added to the church by baptism, since the work began, is *one hundred and twenty-six*, and fifteen by letter. We still enjoy good seasons among ourselves, and hope that God will always enable us to walk in love, but the Spirit seems now in a measure to be withdrawn from among the people."

This extensive ingathering of souls, so far from lifting up the pastor's heart with pride, seems to have led him to increased self-abasement and watchfulness. "Severe conflicts," indeed, he mentions, "arising from pride and unbelief," but the grace of God made him a victor over all.

In these revivals, as well as in ordinary seasons, he was remarkably aided by the co-operation of the church. There were active Christians around him, whose views of the responsibility of the Christian profession were not satisfied with a mere attendance upon the worship of the Sabbath and a pecuniary contribution for its support; but they established and conducted meetings for prayer, and went from house to house throughout the

town, often thus spending days and even weeks for the promotion of religion. The machinery of modern revivals was then unknown, and the multitudes thronged the sanctuary, not drawn by the eccentricities of the preacher, but by solemn influences from on high, accompanying the earnest exertions of many devoted children of God. The church, not the preacher only, were the chief human agency connected with these manifestations of heavenly grace; and that, not merely in religious meetings, but in direct, personal exertions in the community.

Another distinguishing feature in these revivals was the union of spirit among Christians of different denominations. Mr. Bennett, in his description of these seasons, thus speaks:

"By union of Christian effort, we do not mean any combination of influence by agreement, either among members of the same church or of different churches, but a most hearty co-operation among the people of God in the work, *as* the work of God, or because it was the work of God. In none of these revivals, is it believed, the spirit or feeling prevailed to any great extent, that it was a Baptist, or Presbyterian revival, or that the revival was among any denomination as such, but among the citizens of Homer, *as sinners against God.*

As a consequence, the weekly meetings for conference and prayer were by mutual consent set up in school-houses in different districts in town, and attended in common by all the neighbors, and by the pastors and leading brethren in both the Baptist and Presbyterian churches, nearly every night for months together, in such harmony, that a stranger might not have suspected they belonged to different denominations. The evenings were almost exclusively employed in fervent prayer to God for the influence of the Holy Spirit, conscious that His agency was indispensable, attended with most humble and hearty confession of sin, and earnest, spirited appeals to the people for their eternal benefit in the name of Jesus Christ.

"The preaching, in these revivals, was distinctly marked with that truth which vindicated God's government over His creatures, and charged the sinner with the guilt of violating His holy law. It was that kind of preaching which seemed more careful to please God than to be approved of men; which showed the sinner that, while his misery was the result of his own choice, his salvation and ultimate happiness depended entirely on God's choice. Of course, it was his only hope and indispensable duty to repent and believe the Gospel, and look to God through the atonement of Christ

for pardon and justification as an act of His *sovereign grace.* Convictions for sin were deep and pungent, both in saints and sinners, and at times it was hard to know in which they excelled, for backsliders returned *in deed and in truth*, and not in word only.

"The conviction of the sinner arose at first from a sight of his life; he had done wrong, and he feared justice, and awfully trembled in view of hell; but soon he saw his heart was worse, much worse than his life had been, and was the seat of the difficulty, for it was enmity against God; that the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart were evil, and had been evil continually, and therefore there was no hope but in the *mercy* of God. Truth led them to discover that nothing but the righteousness of Christ imparted to them could give them such a character as they needed for acceptance with God. The length of time conviction for sin continued, varied from one day to three weeks; generally, from one to two weeks. It was not a common thing for a convicted sinner to find peace of mind in public meetings. Few, it is believed, date their conversion in the conference-room, or while others were praying with them. The greater number gained evidence of pardon from God, against whom they had sinned,

while they were alone, in humble prayer, reading the Bible, or in silent meditation.

"The prevailing exercises of the converted were love, joy, and peace: love to God as the sovereign of the world, to Christ as the Saviour of sinners, to the Bible, the people and service of God. The holy law of God, which was their chief trouble before, now afforded exquisite delight. They would often say, *Oh, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.* But Christ, the blessed Christ, was the theme on which *all loved to dwell.* He seemed to occupy most of the thoughts and affections, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth spoke. Christ crucified occupied a large place in all the exhortations and addresses, in which the saints gave vent to their feelings in the public assembly, and by which they sought to win back their fellow-sinners from the paths of the destroyer."

We are apt to indulge in illusion respecting the past: as in the recollection of some departed friend, we forget the faults and magnify the virtues. Nestor, the sage of the Iliad, is ever dilating with the garrulity of dotage upon the majestic warriors and deeds of mighty daring, familiar in his recollections of other days, and contrasting with the fathers the puny and degenerate virtues of their

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sons. This is human nature. The venerated men who were the fathers in our churches, as they pass from our midst, doubtless often become enshrined by our imagination in exalted excellencies which exceed the reality. So also of events. The revivals of former years, as they are now recounted to us, might seem to be attended with none of the evils which, in the present, are often seen to accompany them, because memory recalls only the good accomplished.

While, however, we make all proper abatement for this obliviousness to the evils of the past; the disunion in churches, the great defection in converts, and the general deterioration of piety, so often following revival efforts now, cannot fail to impress the reader with a conviction that other and evil elements are at work to produce results so diverse from those above recorded. The Christian ought, indeed, still to utter the fervent prayer of the prophet, *O Lord, revive Thy work*, as the only hope of true spiritual progress; but it may well be coupled with the earnest entreaty that the work of man, in the temporary excitement of the religious passions, be not impiously substituted for the work of God, and disaster and desolation come in the stead of blessing and the fruits of godliness.

CHAPTER VII.

CONTEMPORARIES.

During his earlier life as pastor, Mr. Bennett occupied a conspicuous position amidst a group of men in the Madison Association, distinguished by their extraordinary mental endowments, the depth and power of their spiritual exercises, and the wide-spread influence they have exerted. The memory of these godly men still lingers with rich fragrance in the hearts of the fathers in our churches; but as that generation is rapidly disappearing in the tomb, their remembrance must soon pass away, and their record be left only on high.

Mostly without scholastic education, there was yet a native vigor and compass of intellect, an intimate acquaintance with the letter and spirit of the Bible, and an entireness of self-sacrifice on the altar of Christ, which gave them a power now seldom wielded in the ministry or the church. Their temporal support was secured chiefly by their own toil: they held the plow and swung the

axe with the sturdy force of pioneers in the forest. The Scriptures were their chief library; the woods and fields, where upon their knees they wrestled with God, were the place of their study. They went thus into the log-cabin, or the humble school-house, and in the midst of the gathered crowd, spake of Christ and His salvation with a Divine unction and power which was evidently from the Holy Ghost. Often held in deep distrust by Christians of other names, and menaced with petty persecution, the hearts of these early ministers were only knit the more closely in their own brotherhood.

Nor were the ministry alone distinguished. There were men of peculiar force of character and godly zeal in less public station. Nearly every church numbered a few such among its founders; men mighty in the Scriptures and in prayer, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. Their houses were the hospitable home of the weary minister on his way to some distant appointment, the place where the neighborhood assembled for prayer and preaching, and noted in the spiritual history of many around as associated with their conversion to God. These holy men often spent weeks in visiting from house to house, to converse upon the interests of the soul and plead with God for the

salvation of their fellow-men. At the close of the sermon on the Sabbath, it was customary for some one or more of them to take up the preacher's theme and make a practical application of it to the congregation; and not seldom was the exhortation of the deacon attended with mightier energy than the discourse of the "Elder"—this last being then the common designation of a pastor, whether he were in youth or age. Among them stood Jonathan Olmstead, with Samuel and Elisha Payne, of Hamilton; the now venerable Ebenezer Wakely, of Pitcher; with Asa Bennett and John Keep, of Homer. These, with other distinguished laymen, whom the limits of this work do not permit me to mention, were men of peculiar might. Their intellectual power was associated with great depth of experimental religion; in maturing plans for extending the kingdom of Christ, they were gifted with extraordinary wisdom; and seldom was there a revival of religion whose approach was not betokened by the increasing fervor and strengthening faith of these holy men.

The Association was the meeting of chief interest. To this hallowed gathering the elders and brethren came up with great gladness, as to one of the richer feasts of Zion. Their garments were only of homespun, but beneath them beat hearts

glowing with love to Christ and to one another, and the greetings had a warmth and godly sincerity, which the "progress" of nearly half a century has not increased. Happily, an Association had not then become a merely fiscal organization, or a place where every agitator went to quarrel for his peculiar "resolutions;" but Christian brethren met to mingle holy sympathies in mutual trials, invoke in unison the presence and anointing of the Holy Ghost, and give themselves afresh for the work of Christ. In the earliest times, no person was previously appointed to deliver the annual sermon; but when they were assembled, by general consent, some member was requested to speak to them the Gospel; and often these extemporaneous effusions were attended with great power. When they parted, it was usually with tears, and many were the revival influences which went forth from this holy convocation.

Prominent among the compeers of Mr. Bennett was *Ashbel Hosmer*, pastor at Hamilton. Without classical education, he was a man of rare natural eloquence, sound in judgment, quick of discernment, and indefatigable in his exertions. "Great and unwearied were his labors for the cause of truth; travelling night and day, in heat and frost, snow and rain, through dismal wilds and unbeaten

roads, oftentimes hungry, wet, and cold, without any prospect of pecuniary reward." One of the first in the ministry who had settled west of the Hudson, he was a pioneer in the wilderness, and stood until his death a leader among the churches. He died, 1812, "with unshaken confidence in that Redeemer whose cause he so zealously espoused, and whose Gospel he preached with so much fervency."

Younger, but of higher mental power, was *Salmon Morton*, the pastor of Madison. The "law-work" in his religious experience had been deep and powerful; it was through fearful mental struggles he passed from darkness and despair to the light and glory of the Cross. He was a man of giant intellect, with wonderful compass and power of expression. Often would he hold an assembly for two hours in rapt attention, while he unfolded the profound mysteries of redemption. Learned, in the technical sense, he was not; but educated he was, if powers disciplined to rigid investigation, a wide grasp of thought, and extended acquisitions in biblical and theological knowledge, are true marks of education. Deficient in the practical wisdom of the pastor, his power lay in the pulpit, especially in the development of the profounder themes of the Gospel: the opposer

and the skeptic have often trembled before him. "His zeal in a day of persecution would have brought him speedily to a martyr's stake. Though valiant in soul, he was often tender and humble as a child. Seldom did he preach a sermon without tears flowing, under a sense of the condition of the impenitent, or the infinite depth of divine compassion." He entered into rest in 1822.

Obed Warren, of Eaton, was another among the worthies around the earlier life of Mr. Bennett. Above the ordinary stature, of ruddy countenance, expressive of great resolution and energy, he was always in motion. He feared not the face of man, but with an unflinching faithfulness, which reminded you of Paul, he *shunned not to declare all the counsel of God, and ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.* Sound in doctrine, "his preaching was plain, practical, and impressive." In council, he was quick, impulsive; his conclusions seemed rather the result of intuition than of reasoning, yet they were ordinarily verified by the most extended investigation; and his prayers, added to his counsels, would always inspire you with confidence and hope. The dying words of this man of God were the natural conclusion of his life: *Farewell! I am pure from the blood of all men.*

John Lawton, of German, was one of the seniors among his brethren. Above the medium height and somewhat slender in person, a countenance grave and mild was expressive of the qualities which distinguished him. He was a "Mr. Standfast;" not a man to be turned from the right path either by passion or by novelty, but always sound in the Scriptures, pursuing with steady, unostentatious zeal the holy work of the ministry. Judicious in counsel, kind, earnest, and dignified in manner, the universal affection with which he was regarded would be naturally blended with feelings of veneration. His power in the pulpit was not in those startling thoughts and bursts of passion which suddenly arouse the intenser emotions; but his words, distilling as the dew, with refreshing influence, calmed the agitated soul and awoke gentler and holier trains of thought and emotion. He was the man to be implicitly trusted, of weighty opinion, and whose character the breath of reproach could never tarnish. "The wilderness and the solitary place" were made glad by him; his indefatigable labors, though now without written record, are indelibly marked in the earlier history of many churches in that region, and in the "book of remembrance" before the Lord.

Peter P. Roots was for several years the only man

of classical education. For eighteen years, he was almost incessantly engaged as a missionary, often at his own expense, during which he ordinarily rode three thousand miles a year, and preached three hundred sermons. Portly in form and of countenance benignant, his life, though intensely active, was overcast for the most part by religious depression. His discourses were "evangelical, sensible, plain, and richly stored with Scripture truth." His was the learned pen which the less literary of his brethren invoked, to point their crude sentences and aid in giving just written expression to their sentiments. Like good "Mr. Fearing," though his life had been full of doubts, his dying hours were filled with holy comfort and triumph; and it was observed, "the water of that river was lower at this time than ever I saw it in my life, and he went over at last, not much above wetshod."

Of somewhat different characteristics was *John Peck*, then in youth, the active pastor of Cazenovia. Gentle and winning in manner, he touched the tenderer chords in the heart with a persuasive power, which often effected more than the most masterly reasonings and the loftiest bursts of eloquence. Simple and unpretending, grave and earnest, there was a heavenly-mindedness in con-

versation and prayer, an unaffected sincerity in his discourses, and a weeping compassion in his appeals, which carried conviction to the conscience and disarmed all opposition. He was wise in winning souls, and revivals were continually around him. Prudent in counsel, and eminently blessed as a peacemaker, there was no man who ruled with greater power in the hearts of his brethren. Love was the element he breathed, and it was diffused all around him.

Nathaniel Kendrick, of Eaton, was a man of more capacious mind. Though devoid of classical attainments, he was even at this period a profound thinker in theology. Tall and muscular in form, slow and measured in speech, except when roused by the glow and energy of mental action, combining in the expression of his features great force of character with high intellectual power, he was always a leader whose weighty judgment gave direction to the counsels of the brotherhood. On occasions of great magnitude, when the cause needed a powerful advocate, the lot commonly fell on "Elder Kendrick," whose literary acquirements, depth of thought, and disciplined powers, eminently fitted him to make the proper impression. His library was the common resort for the resolution of doubtful theological questions, and

"the counsel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man inquired at the oracle of God."

Others there were, also distinguished, as the venerated *Thomas Purinton*, of Truxton, and *Daniel Hascall*, of Hamilton, then in their prime and might, whose revered forms are still among us, and whose eulogies, therefore, we may not be permitted to record.

Probably few preachers of the present day have equalled in pulpit power these earlier servants of God. They were mostly men who had been forced into the work by the urgency of conviction. A woe was upon them, if they preached not the Gospel. Without educational advantages, they were men of original thought, and drank in truth from no secondary springs, but at the pure fountain of God's Word. Their dependence on the Spirit of God was constant and heartfelt. In this lay their great strength. They preached, as well as prayed, *in the Holy Ghost.* The effects following were often of the most striking character, and such as are now rarely witnessed, except in seasons of special revival. Experimental religion was the theme of their ministry; and if they dwelt much upon the deeper doctrines of the Gospel, it was because these foundation truths were closely associated with their own profound religious exercises.

The "strong meat" dealt out by these faithful stewards of God, made healthy and vigorous Christians, rising "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" of whom not a few remain, exhibiting a distinctness of doctrinal views, a ripeness of religious experience, and a pureness of Christian character, which attest the mighty power of the doctrine of grace, as an element of Christian development.

From the men thus associated went forth influences of great power. Among them originated the Hamilton Baptist Missionary Society, under whose auspices a large number of churches in Central New York were organized and grew up to strength, and which subsequently became a chief constituent element in the New York Baptist State Convention. From agencies in their midst, also, arose the New York Baptist Education Society and the Hamilton Literary and Theological Institution, over whose destinies Kendrick and Hascall long presided, and by which multitudes have been aided in a preparation for the ministry, and sent forth to bless the world. Men of self-denial, faith, and prayer, not of titled learning, but of great mental and moral strength, they were honored of Heaven in the pioneer work connected with the Redeemer's kingdom.

Among these men, Mr. Bennett held a distinguished position. His presence was always hailed with joy in the association, the council, or other gathering of the brotherhood. Eminently warm hearted and social, frank and generous, he was a universal favorite in the ministry. The announcement that he was to preach on any public occasion would always collect a crowd. The effects of his preaching in later life, though often remarkable, probably never equalled those produced by his efforts at this period, while the fire and energy of youth were undiminished by physical exhaustion and infirmity. Often has a whole assembly sat and wept, as from his capacious soul, which seemed filled with the Holy Ghost, he poured forth the melting truths of the Gospel, and spake of the value of the soul and the realities of an eternal world. A heavenly glow would seem to light up the speaker's mind, and his lips had utterance in burning words, as if touched with a living coal from the altar of God.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLOSING PASTORAL WORK.

The missionary spirit, which was already burning in the bosom of the pastor, he sought to enkindle in the hearts of the converts gathered into the church during the revivals which have been mentioned. At his suggestion a missionary society was organized among the young people, two of whose members afterwards went forth to labor among the heathen: this association continues a means of much usefulness to the present day.

The Oneida Indians, then a tribe of very considerable extent, early attracted the attention of the Hamilton Baptist Missionary Society; and at the close of 1819, a deputation, consisting of Messrs. Bennett and Lawton, was sent to explore the field, with reference to the establishment of a mission among them. They were received with much cordiality on the part of most, and, after a season of great interest, returned with a report favoring the proposed enterprise. He was engaged in 1820 and 1821 in temporary agencies

for the above society, and his journal shows the great interest he felt in the extension of the Gospel. Numerous societies for missionary purposes were organized during these tours. In 1822 we find the following record in a brief journal:

"*Oct.* 8.—Commending my dear family and people to Almighty God, I set out as agent for the Hamilton Baptist Missionary Society, to visit the Eastern States, and make collections. My spirits were much depressed, but found them a little raised by Christian society on the way.

"9.—Met with the Board at Oneida, and received instructions for my journey. How incompetent to the work upon which I am entering! *O Lord, except thy presence go with me, send me not up!* In the afternoon attended a council with the Indians: found them anxious for instruction. Meditated upon their deplorable situation, and said, with more than common feeling, *Who hath made me to differ?* After the setting of the sun, when we had commended each other to God, on whom we believed, I took my leave of the brethren with a heavy heart."

During this journey, upon which he seems to have entered with many misgivings respecting his adaptation for such a work, he visited Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts, and was every-

where received with great respect and kindness. His interviews with Dr. Gano, at Providence, and Dr. Baldwin, in Boston, are mentioned with special interest. A visit to his parents is thus described:

"17.—Arrived at my father's house, and found my parents in usual health. In the mutual indulgence of social and natural feeling, we sat down together, and together knelt down before the Throne. I then retired, and was led to reflect upon the blessings of a father's house. *The children of God* shall always live in their Father's house, and eat at their Father's table."

He was absent on this tour seven weeks, during which he travelled in his own conveyance more than one thousand miles, and collected for the Indian Mission nearly five hundred dollars—a result which was regarded then as most successful.

Though constantly engaged thus in active exertion for the Redeemer's kingdom, his cup was not one of unmingled joy. A letter of December 27, 1823, reveals some of the trials with which he was encompassed:

"Surely, the goodness and mercy of God are from everlasting to everlasting. If I ask myself why I have hope in Christ, I can only say, because God would have it so.

'T was the same love that spread the feast
Which sweetly forced me in;
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin.'

I am compelled to say and write bitter things against myself. My heart is cold and hard; my understanding, dark. I feel a great want of humility. *Oh, that I were as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me, and by His light I walked through darkness!* That which I find in myself, which occasions sorrow, is not all my grief. Zion here is languishing. Many churches are without ministers; some in deep difficulty. Nearly all are without any special revival."

The spirit of emigration at this time, also, began to come over the church like an overwhelming flood, and very many of the younger members removed westward. Though it was pleasant to him to know that they went forth in the spirit and power of the Gospel, the loss was also deeply felt, especially as death began now to take away some of the pillars in the church. His brother, Deacon Asa Bennett, was removed by death in 1825; and Judge Keep, also, became enfeebled, and though he lingered longer, a few years after was taken up to rest. These were the companions of his

early ministry, men upon whom he had been wont to lean for many years. Their sound judgment, earnest, practical godliness, and enlightened zeal, had contributed much to his success as a pastor. Of the former it is recorded, "he devoted his time frequently for weeks, and, in one instance, for three months together, in visiting from house to house by day, exhorting and praying with families, and in the evening attending conference and prayer meetings, or otherwise laboring for the extension of the cause of Christ in the world." The loss of two such men bore heavily upon the heart of the bereaved servant of God.

The dying hours of Deacon Asa Bennett, which were eminently characteristic of his active life, are thus described in the language of his brother Alfred:

"For months before he died, he wished to hear no conversation upon things earthly; he would say, I have done with these things; they afford me no entertainment; talk on death, judgment, heaven, eternity; these things I am approaching, and these are all-important to me and others also. Much useful instruction was from time to time communicated by him: the following remarks will serve as a specimen.

"At one time he said, I have much company of

the best kind, such as ministers, deacons, and eminently pious Christian friends; yet in them I can discover much that is unlike the *glorious Saviour*. What then must we think of many professors, and in what an awful condition must the world be, which lieth in wickedness about us!

"To the pastor of the church, who had been for some months laid by from pulpit labors, through bodily indisposition, he said, My work is done, but I think God will yet raise you up for further usefulness in the church, and if you ever do get able to preach again, be *faithful* to God, and deal with souls in earnest; urge upon the people the necessity of *personal*, *practical holiness*. Many mistake the object entirely, while they live stupid and encumbered with the cares of this world, and yet hope that when they come to be sick and die, they shall enjoy religion. Tell them that affliction, sickness, and death will not give comfort, or secure to them any evidence of their good estate: it is the Spirit and love of God in the heart which will give this, and that must be secured by a *life* devoted to God in holy obedience through Jesus Christ. Some depend much upon the last moments of life, and inquire with much earnestness, how did the person feel? what did he say? This is no certain test of a sinner's good estate. Necessity

may induce a person then to say that which the *heart* never subscribed to. It is an awful place to make a wreck, just as they think they are entering the port of Heaven! Men will die as they live; the character is formed for heaven or hell in *life*, not in death. Oh, that they could see this as it appears to me! Tell sinners to repent and believe the Gospel; urge the *necessity* of it; exhibit the holiness of the law of God; hold up the glorious character of a crucified Redeemer in the Gospel; persuade, beseech them to be reconciled to God. Death, judgment, and an awful hell are just before them, and they heed it not; they are asleep, yea, *dead in their sins.*

"At another time, some of the youth of the church and congregation visited him, and spent some time in singing hymns, one of which begins:

'From whence doth this union arise?'

In the last stanza the following words delighted him much:

'And *all* His *bright glory* shall see.'

It was his favorite hymn, but it seemed new to him then. I am, said he, going into that glory immediately—it is near—it does not seem to be an arm's length—no, it is *here*, *right before me!*

The special savor of this lasted with him several days."

The departure of this excellent servant of God, though thus triumphant, left the bereaved brother and pastor in deep affliction; for it pleased the Lord, also, to visit him with severe illness. In March, 1825, as intimated above, he was laid aside from all public labors, and for seven months did not resume his place in the pulpit. Much alarm was felt lest death should remove him, too, from his earthly usefulness. Of this period he remarks, in a letter dated May 1, 1825:

"It seemed to me quite likely my time had come to die. But I could not say that I was in perfect readiness to go. I thought of my companion and children: they were dear to me. I looked on them and loved them; yet felt as though I could leave *them* with more composure than I could part with the dear people of my charge. The condition in which the church would be left affected me much, and sometimes held my eyes waking in the night watches. Deacon Bennett has served his generation, I believe, according to the will of God. He is going down to the grave, and has probably done all he ever will do for the Church. Well, thought I, must Zion be deprived of one of her best members, and this church of

its most useful deacon, and its poor, unworthy pastor at the same time! When, also, I considered the state of the world lying in wickedness around me, with few to lift their warning voice, or point inquiring souls to the Lamb of God, I was inclined still to remain in the flesh, and labor a little longer for the establishment of saints and the conversion of sinners. At present I am slowly recovering, and am now concerned, should I come back again to life, lest I be a burden rather than a blessing. How unhappy must he be who, under the reign of grace, does not *return again* according to the mercy received!"

These trials, however, were only as the gloom of night which deepens before the coming day. While he was yet in feeble health, another gracious revival began its work in the congregation, the effects of which were hardly less extensive than in 1820. From a letter addressed to his "Honored Parents," December 23, 1825, descriptive of the beginning of this work, we take the following:

"I attended a conference last week on Thursday evening at the East Settlement. The school-house is large and convenient, but it was filled to overflowing. The meeting opened about six o'clock, and until nine the time was well occupied. Thirty-

eight different persons spoke on the subject of religion with great solemnity and interest, while the most profound attention prevailed through the assembly, notwithstanding they were uncomfortably crowded. Among the number who spoke were three lads, about fifteen years of age, who told us of the joy in religion which they had experienced within a few days past. Tuesday and part of Wednesday I spent in visiting from house to house on East River, when I conversed with about fifty persons, old and young, nearly all of whom seemed more or less affected by the Spirit of Truth. The members of the church living in that neighborhood were much engaged, and others, who had once indulged hope, began to feel the importance of either acting in accordance with it, or seeking a better one: sinners viewed themselves in much danger, and were deeply troubled to know what they must do to be saved.

"What will be the event of this excitement among the people, I know not. My soul's desire is that they may be saved. God is *able* to work by His Holy Spirit, building up the Church, and appearing in His glory. *Without Him we can do nothing.* I was always unworthy of the ministry, and very incapable of fulfilling its important work: if God has ever accomplished any good by

me, it has been by taking one of the *weak things* to confound the mighty, and to Him be all the glory. My mind has been much quickened of late. The Gospel and the Saviour appear precious; the Scriptures are full of sweetness, the souls of men seem valuable, time looks short, and death, judgment, and eternity appear near. What sweet entertainment will the saints have with the Saviour in the heavenly state! free from sin, and made like unto their Lord. When the powers of the soul become sufficiently strengthened (as they will at death) to endure those visions of glory which will break upon the enraptured sight, and enjoy that *exceeding and eternal weight of glory* before the throne of God, now so far above the reach of earthly conception, how will this world, with its interests and pleasures, appear insignificant and contemptible!"

Of this awakening, he elsewhere writes: "The work has been good, gradual, and powerful. It has also been quite general over the town, although in some neighborhoods it has not been very thorough. If we reckon all as converted to God who have expressed hope in Christ, we should number nearly four hundred in this town as having been of late subjects of renewing grace; probably more than three hundred will at last

shine as stars in the kingdom of their Father. All the religious denominations have shared in the work." As the immediate result of this rich manifestation of grace, ninety were added to the Baptist church; but its influences continued long afterwards in the increased enjoyment and union among the people of God.

The family of Mr. Bennett, consisting of four sons and one daughter, had hitherto been unbroken by death. He had often been called to stand at the grave of the dead among his flock, and mingle his sympathies with bereaved parental hearts; but never had personal experience bowed his own soul with that form of grief. This cup was now given him to drink. His daughter, Elsina, while on a visit to Truxton, was suddenly attacked by disease, and in a few days hurried away by death, in her fourteenth year. During the recent revival, her mind had been much exercised, but she had as yet made no public profession of hope in Christ. A letter, Sept. 25, 1826, in which he says, "Her corpse lies beside me in the room while I am writing," contains the following remarks indicative of the manner in which he bore this afflictive stroke: "This I can say, God is just and good, and hath done as seemed good in His sight. I thought I had some freedom at

times during her sickness, in prayer, that her spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus; and with Him the Judge of all, I must leave the case. I desire greatly that I may not come out of the deep waters of this affliction, without gaining much lasting good to my soul. I needed just such a stroke from the correcting hand of my Heavenly Father; but oh! how unwilling I was to meet it! My unbelieving heart said, Lord, keep Thy chastening hand away. But shall we not be in subjection to the Father of Spirits and live?"

The church had now become so large, that their house of worship was wholly inadequate for the accommodation of the congregation, and in 1827 a harmonious division of the body was effected, forming the three churches at Homer, Cortlandville, and McGrawville; in each of which there are still many who recall with fervent gratitude the holy ministry of their former venerated pastor. He continued in the pastoral office with that part which located in the village of Homer. Here an efficient church gathered round him, and in 1830, the Divine Presence filled their new sanctuary, and reviving influences were again felt. In a communication to Dr. Bolles, Jan. 30, after stating his previous intention to comply so far with

the request of the Foreign Missionary Board as to spend a number of weeks among the churches in behalf of missions, he remarks: "And now, dear sir, I must say the way is closed up for the present against my leaving home. There are very flattering appearances in the town, and especially in the church and congregation with which I am connected, of an extensive revival of pure religion. The church is awaking out of sleep, and meetings on devotional occasions, a few weeks past, have been exceedingly interesting. Besides, in the village and other neighborhoods, the youth to the number of from one hundred and fifty to one hundred and seventy-five are engaged in Bible-class instruction; and in three out of the four classes there is great solemnity, some having deep conviction for sin. A few have found peace by the blood of Christ, while many others are still inquiring."

These signs of promise were not fallacious. The interest continued to increase, and in March of the same year he wrote: "The revival is still interesting: my attention is almost wholly engrossed with it. Perhaps forty or fifty souls have of late expressed hope in the Saviour, and many more are under deep impressions of mind."

A sermon he preached July 4, 1830, entitled

The Kingdom of Christ distinguished from the Kingdom of Cæsar, which was subsequently published at the request of his congregation, involved him in an extended newspaper discussion. The discourse was a distinct enunciation and defence of the great scriptural principle, "That civil government is to be respected and supported under the Gospel dispensation as a distinct thing entirely from the interests and government of the Church;" that in matters purely civil Christians ought to render obedience to the civil magistrate, but in things appertaining to religion they owe fealty alone to Christ. To some of the positions assumed in the illustration of this truth, much exception was taken by Pedobaptists, and the public discussion, long and warm, elicited at that time great interest. As the correspondence is not now before me, its points cannot here be stated. It gave, however, not only publicity but additional reputation to Mr. Bennett in the denomination with which he was connected.

The following "tribute, as the blessing of one who was ready to perish," is from a letter addressed to the writer of this work by Mrs. R., now residing in Michigan, and will be read with interest, as illustrative of his life as pastor.

"In the summer of 1818, having been a mem-

ber of the church, of which Mr. Bennett was pastor, about a year, my mind became exceedingly distressed and driven nearly to despair, respecting the change of heart which I had professed. At length coming to the conclusion that I ought to withdraw from the church, I wrote to him, stating my case, and asking his advice and direction. He replied briefly, in something like the following language:

"'VERY DEAR SISTER IN CHRIST—

"'I do most deeply sympathize with you under the discouragements of which you complain. After all I have experienced, when I take a view of the corruption of my own heart, I have many misgivings, lest all may yet be wrong. But still, I do hope in the mercy of God through the atoning blood of Christ, that I shall yet obtain the victory over all my inbred corruption and all the machinations of the adversary.

"'I see nothing in your case except what Christians in all ages have had to contend with; and I trust these trials will in the end work for your good. Resist temptations. Walk close with God. Cast all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.'

"The next winter, while I was attending school

in the village, and boarding at his house, he understood that I was in need of a few shillings in order to prosecute my studies to advantage, and unobservedly and silently placed in my hand the requisite amount.

"In the spring of 1831, hearing that I wished to see him, as I had been long in feeble health, he called, and kindly inquired respecting my situation. After patiently listening to the story of my destitution, he said: 'All that I can do for you now, is to ask God to do every thing that He sees best: let us pray.' Father B. had visited and prayed with me many times before in sickness, but that was especially a prevailing prayer. I seemed carried by it away from pain, and fear, and care. I appeared enveloped in the devotion of his soul, and warmed by the fervor of his petition. My tempest-tossed spirit experienced a tranquillity that the world cannot give. It was prophetic; and my life in regard to temporal things since appears to have been sketched in that prayer, but it will never be fully answered until in a good old age, as a shock of corn fully ripe, I am garnered in the rest which remains for the people of God.

"A few days afterwards, he called one morning as he was passing, and gave me some money, say-

ing, 'Your friend authorizes me to leave this with you, to be appropriated to your present want.' I might add much more, but I know that thousands can give a like testimony if they would speak."

Again, in 1832, a visitation of the Holy Spirit was experienced, in connection with faithful Christian efforts. It was customary then for neighboring pastors to aid each other in special meetings for religious exertion; and the Divine blessing often richly attended these united labors. Of one of these seasons, he wrote, March 3, 1832: "It has truly been a precious season to many, both in the church and out. Probably one hundred have been aroused to a serious inquiry about their souls, and about thirty have expressed hope in the Saviour already during the meeting. We hope others may soon find peace in believing on Jesus Christ. My time and attention have been all occupied, but it has been a blessed season to me. It is good to see the Spirit of Christ controlling the affections of the saints, and elevating their desires towards the throne of God, and behold the subduing power of redeeming love bowing the hearts of sinners, once impenitent, to the obedience of the faith."

During his ministry he baptized more than seven hundred and seventy persons, who gave evi-

dence to the church of their conversion to God, and nearly all of whom made their public profession of religion while he was pastor. Many of these are still living, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

These seasons of religious interest are here recorded, not as filling up the whole of his experience as a pastor, but as indicating the blessings that attended his unremitting exertions. They were harvests; the bleak and dreary winter, and the laborious seed-time which preceded them, were not less filled with patient watchfulness and earnest effort; but the fruits were mainly garnered in the ingathering of revival. The pastor's heart was often depressed beneath the cares and toils of his responsible station. Many a sermon seemed to fall powerless upon the careless ear; many a social prayer-meeting was to him a scene only of sorrow, on account of the wintry atmosphere which pervaded it; many a difficulty needed kind and careful interposition for its adjustment; many a valued Christian, on whom he leaned, was stricken down by his side, and borne to the grave; and, what brought still more poignant anguish, temptation also had its victims, and some, who once bid fair for heaven, fell beneath its malign power. But the faithful sower, heeding the divine prom-

ise, *in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not*, amidst sunshine and storm, ceased not to scatter broadcast the seeds of life; and though he often went forth weeping, it was permitted him to return again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MISSIONARY AGENCY.

The spirit of missions is everywhere the same, whether developed in the home or the foreign field. The sickly sentimentalism which has tears to shed over the lost millions of paganism, but puts forth no effort for the evangelization of the uninstructed and guilty multitudes around us, possesses no higher virtue than the contracted sympathy which extends not beyond its own church-walls. Neither has its origin at the Cross. That benevolence whose outgushing is only at the tale of distant misery, while the widow and the fatherless at our door are unvisited, and the lost in our midst are unsought and unreclaimed, does not flow from the "pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb." Jesus wept over Jerusalem. His healing power, with words of heavenly wisdom and invitation, was exerted throughout Judea, while yet before Him stretched the millions of heathendom, and

His compassionate heart yearned over the lost condition of a world. The active Christian at home is ordinarily the true-hearted friend of Christian exertion abroad.

The men who toiled in our ministry during the past generation possessed much of the missionary spirit. But the moral desolation around them claimed their efforts. We find them, while their own churches were still in infancy, organizing missionary associations to spread the Gospel. Laborious and extended tours were undertaken through the wilderness, when the avenues of travel were yet unopened, dispensing the words of life to the destitute; and in the humble log-cabin many a soul was made to rejoice in pardon and hope, through these self-denying exertions. When Providence called the Baptist denomination to engage in the work of foreign missions, these men were among the first to respond to the summons, and enter actively into the field. The Madison Association, at its annual session, 1814, on receiving a communication from Luther Rice in behalf of the "General Convention of the Baptist denomination in the United States," after the report of a committee, of which Mr. Bennett was a member, responded with high and grateful enthusiasm, and solemnly "agreed to unite with their brethren,

in exerting all their energies to promote the glorious cause of the Redeemer, not only by their prayers, but by contributing of their worldly property."

The ardent zeal for missions, with which the Homer pastor sought to inspire the young in his congregation, produced its effect, not only in contributions, but in personal consecration to the work. In 1829, his eldest son, Cephas, who had then removed to Utica, left a lucrative business at the summons of the Master, and entered the service of the board at Burmah, as printer, and subsequently as preacher, among the heathen, where he still labors with eminent fidelity and success. The views of the father on this occasion are briefly expressed in a letter to Rev. Alvin Bennett, September 24, 1828:

"I have at present one source of trial to my natural feelings, of which you as yet know nothing by experience. An acquaintance is forming between the Board of Foreign Missions and Cephas, with a view to his location in Burmah as a printer, to spend his life in that distant land. Should such an event occur, you will see it must be a trial to parental hearts. Cephas and his wife are willing to go; yea, rather wish it. Indeed, his mind has been leading that way, I have known, for some

years, but no door seemed to open until now. Whether he will yet go or not remains to be determined. Should he go at all, he will probably leave America some time next summer. Now, all this, I know, is in perfect accordance with the prayer of faith—*Thy kingdom come*—and with the conversion of the heathen to Christ, for they are to be given to Him for His inheritance. I wish to be still, and let the Lord send by whom He pleases, and in the fulness of my heart say, *Thy will be done.*"

The missionary zeal and eminent qualifications of the revered subject of these pages had long attracted the attention of the Executive Board of Foreign Missions, and in 1828, at their urgent solicitation, he accepted a temporary agency to visit churches and associations as far as would consist with the discharge of his pastoral duties. These solicitations were often repeated, and for several years the church, among whom his own ardent love of missions was diffused, permitted him to devote a portion of his time to the interests of that cause. The reports of these labors submitted to the Board show that he was unwearied in his exertions, travelling much through the central and western parts of the State; yet at their close is usually appended the statement: "All I have done

this year has been *without cost* to the Board." Such was the generous devotion with which he gave himself to this work, that in 1831 the Board placed upon their record a resolution expressive of their gratitude for his disinterested and holy zeal.

The providence of God now evidently called him to devote his undivided energies to the home work of missions. His sound judgment, the veneration widely felt for his godly character, and the holy enthusiasm he awakened everywhere in the missionary enterprise, all eminently adapted him to arouse the slumbering zeal of the churches in the effort to give the Gospel to the heathen world. But the loved church over which he had so long presided lay near his heart. The thought of dissolving the pastoral relation was one of painful interest. Most of its members had first gained their hopes of heaven under the word of life ministered by him; they now clung around him as their father in the Gospel. It was an occasion of deep emotion when the revered pastor laid before them the communication of the Board, proposing a permanent separation from his people, and the devotion of his remaining days to the interests of foreign missions. The church appointed a special meeting for prayer and consideration,

the result of which was announced by Mr. Bennett in a letter to Dr. Bolles, corresponding secretary of the Board, June 13, 1832:

"They were unanimous in their desire for me to continue with them, but in view of the importance of the missionary enterprise, the call of the Board, and my convictions of duty on the subject, they acquiesced, concluding it was of God, that it was my duty to go, and they ought to submit. Scarcely a brother spoke his mind on the occasion without giving vent to his emotion in tears; but, I think, grace triumphed, and love to the cause of God, with desire for the wide extension of the Redeemer's kingdom in the earth, made us all willing at length cheerfully to pursue that course which seemed to be marked out for us in Divine Providence, looking to God for direction and support.

"This subject has oppressed me exceedingly. For a long time the foreign mission has seemed to have claims paramount to other objects, and the churches have not been thoroughly awake to its importance. But for two years it has engrossed my feelings more intensely, and almost unfitted me for other duties. The decision, however, is made, and now my chief solicitude is whether I shall please God, and meet the wishes of the

Board. I tremble in view of the responsibilities of the station."

His life as a pastor, uninterrupted for twenty-five years, had been one of great faithfulness. The Spirit of God wrought effectually by him, and in every direction, for miles around, was ground hallowed by his prayer and toil, and associated with recollections of the triumphs of grace. And such was the affection and respect with which he ever inspired his congregation, that when at length he deemed it his duty to propose a separation, it is believed there was not a single member, either of the church or the congregation, who did not ardently love his ministry, and deplore his absence as a personal loss.

"The General Convention of the Baptist denomination in the United States" was then the only organization in America by which the work of foreign missions was carried on in this denomination. Its operations, even at this period, however, were not extended. God had, indeed, richly blessed the labors of Mr. Judson and his coadjutors in the Burman mission, and every year bore to our shores intelligence of new triumphs of the Gospel. The sainted Boardman had just breathed his last in the Karen jungle, after witnessing the first large ingathering of that "people prepared

of the Lord," among whom such wonders of mercy have since been wrought. Nine additional missionaries had just sailed, to join the devoted band toiling amidst the pagodas of India. Every aspect of the missions abroad gave occasion for thanksgiving and hope. But at home the work moved slowly. The total of contributions from all parts of the Union in 1832, was only sixteen thousand five hundred and fifty-six dollars. Many of the churches which are now wealthy and efficient, were then struggling for existence; many of this character, also, in the rapid growth of cities and states have since been formed. Benevolent effort was then, for the most part, unregulated by system, and under the dictates of impulse only was liable to great fluctuations. "The Macedonian," diffusing missionary intelligence at a cost within the means of all, did not then enter the family circle, and act as a monthly monitor to a perishing world; nor was the religious newspaper so generally regarded as essential to a Christian home. Opposition to missionary effort was not uncommon, even in the Middle and Eastern States, and in the West and Southwest large districts were infected with the anti-mission spirit.

In all this the last twenty years have witnessed a vast change. Cheap periodicals, with cheap

postage, and readier means of inter-communication, have diffused information, and prejudices have gradually given place to enlightened views of Christian duty. The press has been teeming with publications illustrating and enforcing the great commission. The Sabbath-school has been a nursery of missionary influence, and the thousands continually issuing from its hallowed walls upon the arena of Christian action, have entered the Church educated for missionary effort. Christians generally have made much advance towards an intelligent appreciation of responsibility respecting the evangelization of the world; and though still far, very far, from the elevation to which they must rise before the Gospel shall be universally published, the signs of upward progress are clear and hopeful. The contributions to the treasury of the American Baptist Missionary Union, reported 1851, fell but little short of one hundred thousand dollars, nearly six times the amount received in the whole country twenty years ago.

Among the human agencies employed in effecting this auspicious change, no individual filled a more useful place than the venerated man whose life is here delineated. From his resignation of the pastoral office to the hour when his spirit en-

tered into the presence of the Master, the diffusion of the pure spirit of missions was the ruling passion of his life. Though associated with various other religious enterprises, to which he gave an intelligent and earnest support, all the energies of his vigorous mind were devoted directly or indirectly to this one great end. It was in him a principle, rising higher than the love of kindred, causing him, with life already advanced, to forsake the comforts of home, and prosecute steadily for many years a laborious and often thankless mission, exposed to every variety of climate, and every form of physical ill. He writes, in a letter addressed to his family, near the close of a long and toilsome tour in the West, May 6, 1840:

"Perhaps this will be the last copy of my feelings you will receive before you have the original in person; for I begin to count upon the days, much more than the miles, which separate us. Sometime in June I devoutly hope to greet my dear family again, and none the less dear because I am long absent. If I am not a Christian, the deception is great. I believe I love my family as well as ever, and desire their happiness as much; but I can be sundered from them cheerfully to promote the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world. If this is not from love to the *truth*, I am

deceived, awfully deceived. It is not affection growing cold towards my dear family, but desires increasing to extend the knowledge of the Lord, laboring daily, *and so much the more as we see the day approaching.*"

It was with such views the servant of God entered upon the new sphere to which Providence called him. Love to Christ, love to souls, and an ardent desire for the elevation of Christian character in the churches, seemed to be the pervading principles of his life, while during many years fulfilling his high commission. No pecuniary inducement was offered. He was appointed "at a salary of four hundred dollars, including his travelling expenses." No permanent agent before him had been in the employ of the Board, and the office was then new in the denomination. He always regarded himself as a pioneer; and with him the determination with which he entered the work became a fixed principle through life, to regard "the raising of money a secondary matter, and make it his first concern to spread information, and lay the foundation of a steady support of the enterprise in future years," by awakening an intelligent elevated missionary spirit in the churches, and giving permanency and system to benevolent action.

CHAPTER X.

TOURS SOUTH AND WEST.

His agency, during the first eight years, was chiefly in the South and West, where he was a pioneer in the advocacy of missions. He travelled for the most part on horseback, exposed to all the changes of the seasons, and amidst hardships under which a frame less robust or a spirit less resolute would have sunk. This period was filled with incidents of deep and often thrilling interest, illustrative of the providence of God and of human character in its various phases; but they were left unrecorded, except on his memory, and are now unknown, only as occasionally related by him, in his own graphic manner, to the friends with whom he was intimately conversant. An outline of his tours, therefore, gathered mostly from letters, is all which can here be presented.

Virginia was his first field, on which he entered at the close of November, 1832. Setting out from

Richmond, he travelled more than nine hundred miles on horseback, visiting numerous churches, and everywhere awakening a deep interest in the cause of missions. Though successful beyond expectation, he says, "My chief consolation, after all, has arisen from the enjoyment of God in my own soul. I have rarely felt such a comfortable flow of feeling in preaching the Gospel of Christ, for so long a time together, as I have enjoyed for some weeks past. Whether the hearers were few or many, it was no embarrassment. I felt a pleasure in spreading out before them the wretched condition of the world, the unspeakable glory, fulness, and adaptation of the Gospel, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, to change the heart and elevate the affections to God, in whom there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore;—and then affectionately inviting them to co-operate in the work of sending this blessed Gospel to every creature."

When he was about to leave the State, the brethren sent earnest letters to the Executive Board, importuning them to permit his continuance there; and if this could not be granted, that he might return a few months, or even weeks, the succeeding winter. At the close of this tour, we find the following memorandum:

"*March* 18.—Arrived at Homer after an absence of four months, in which I have enjoyed good health, travelled in all over twenty-five hundred miles, and collected for the Foreign Mission one thousand two hundred and seventy-one dollars, besides various articles of jewelry."

The amount collected was not, indeed, large; but at that time it was deemed an indication of unusual success, especially in a field comparatively new, where no organized system of benevolence had then been formed.

After spending the summer in New Jersey and New England, he was occupied the following winter at the West, in the States of Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio, laboring with earnest zeal, but not with the same immediate success as in Virginia. Much opposition encountered him from the anti-mission spirit, which was at that time rife in those sections of the country. In reference to this he remarked: "I intend to be kind, affectionate, and faithful, explaining the subject according to the Scriptures, and keeping a conscience void of offence towards God and the people: then I will abide the consequences." In Kentucky, while travelling, he was suddenly attacked with severe illness, occasioned by exposure, and for a time seemed in imminent peril of

his life; but it pleased the Lord to raise him up again. The kindness experienced in a land of strangers much affected him. "During my sickness at Elizabethtown," he writes, "I felt peculiar peace of mind and confidence in God. I knew He would do right. I felt quiet in His hand. I think, in reviewing the dispensation, I am much quickened in prayer, and desirous that I may not live in vain. God has heard prayer, and given me favor in the sight of the people of the land. The physicians were very attentive, and would charge nothing; they said it was their highest pleasure to render me aid. Neither of them professes religion. I could not have been in a kinder family than that of brother H. Himself and wife and children, servants, and every thing, were devoted to my service, and every effort made to render me comfortable by night and by day. All this, too, was gratuitous; they seemed to exult in the idea of being counted worthy to wait upon one of the servants of their Lord. All things work together for good to those who are the called according to God's purpose, and sincerely love Him. And may I hope that He will put *me* among His children? I have always been fearful about my adoption; yet, as I find such abundant proofs of His kindness towards me, I am encour-

aged to hope that, when the storms of life are over, I may be allowed rest in heaven, where Jesus is, and where the saints shall be ever with Him."

After this visitation of sickness, he continued his labors in Kentucky, returning to Homer in the spring, by way of Ohio. Of this tour, he writes to Rev. Alvin Bennett, June 29, 1834:

"My journey was prosperous, and I hope profitable, both to the people among whom I travelled and to the cause generally, especially in stirring up a spirit of benevolence in the churches of the Far West, so that they will be more engaged hereafter in thinking, feeling, praying, and acting for the benefit of the world. How hard it is for us to realize that *the field is the world*, to act with reference to the good of *all* mankind, and to live with a regard to the *whole extent of our being!* I was absent about eight months, travelled about three thousand miles, chiefly with my own team, preached two hundred times, besides a considerable amount of other labor, and collected one thousand dollars for the Foreign Missions. The getting of money, however, was regarded as a matter of very little account in comparison with other objects, such as the removal of prejudices and the diffusion of information, to

correct and settle public opinion in favor of the noble enterprise of giving the Gospel to every creature. Prejudice among many is deep rooted, requiring much labor to subdue it."

When a few weeks of repose had been enjoyed with his friends, he again set out for the West. Mrs. Bennett accompanied him as far as Rochester, whence, he remarks in a memorandum, "I was destined to go on alone towards the 'Far West,' with all the feelings that solitude, a sickly season, and occasional remains of cholera could produce within. But *God is my strength, whom should I fear?* God is the support of my life, of what shall I be afraid? Believing Christ will sustain me, as long as he has aught for me to do in advancing His kingdom, I cheerfully venture forward, relying on Him." Though the cholera was making fearful ravages in many places around him, this terrible scourge did not deter him from his work. He felt that the heathen still needed the Gospel, and demanded unremitting effort to send the messengers of salvation to them. Writing to Dr. Bolles, from Cleveland, he says: "My health is yet good. I feel it my duty to confide all to the care of the Chief Shepherd of Israel, and do what I can to benefit a sinning, dying world by the ministration of the *glorious Gospel*

of the blessed God. The prospect for my work in this country is good, excepting the embarrassment occasioned by the cholera. This is the engrossing subject of conversation. At this moment a man has come in from Detroit, and reports that deaths occur there from twenty to thirty per day. They average here perhaps five or six. May the love of God be shed abroad more abundantly in my heart, and increase the exercise of all the graces of the Holy Spirit, that, whether I live or die, I may be the Lord's."

An affecting appeal respecting the welfare of the soul, addressed to two of his sons, dated Montgomery Co., Tenn., Jan. 1, 1835, belongs to this period. After speaking of the nature and enormity of sin, he adds:

"Will you longer neglect the great salvation? Will you resist the Holy Spirit's influences, and despise Christ, the adorable Saviour, who died to pardon and lives to bless? Remember, my sons, it is not alone the sins of past life that now makes you unhappy, though seventeen years have been spent by you in *sin*, which is an awful fact. Seventeen years spent in open rebellion against God, exposed continually to his eternal vengeance! Yet even all the guilt contracted during that time, though you have sinned under most aggra-

vating circumstances, would be pardoned in a moment, if your hearts were *right now*. It is present impenitence and unbelief that keeps the soul from God. My *dear* children, I beseech you, think on these things, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Receive Him *cordially*, that you may live, and live forever in heaven.

"You will excuse a father who loves you, and loves you none the less for being more than a thousand miles from you at this moment, for writing thus earnestly to you. Indeed, you could hardly forgive me, if I did not deal faithfully with your souls, while I am depriving myself of all domestic happiness for the benefit of the souls of others.

"I was only a little more than seventeen years old when, I trust, my wicked heart was broken before God for sin; the Saviour appeared to my soul the one altogether lovely, and I felt it my highest honor to serve Him. And I may say to you to-day, that all the trouble I have had since has grown out of my unlikeness to Him. When I enjoy His love, I am happy. The trials of life I can then bear with patience, and feel a pleasure in the toilsome labors of the Gospel, even in a land of strangers, when I can say, *I know that my Redeemer liveth.*"

He continued his labors in the West, through Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee, until April, when he attended the General Convention in its triennial session, held at Richmond, Va. In the report rendered to this body respecting his service for two years and five months, we find the following paragraphs:

"During this time efforts have been put forth in many large and important assemblies, such as the 'Convention of Western Baptists,' State Conventions, and anniversaries of societies for spreading the Gospel at home and abroad. More than six hundred sermons have been delivered, while in performing this labor he has travelled over ten thousand miles, and a large portion of this on horseback.

"In conclusion, the sufferings, exposures, and labors, with the sacrifices made of personal ease, domestic comfort, and social enjoyment, have been more than made up in the soul by the enjoyment of the Divine favor, the sweet, peace-pervading spirit of the Gospel, the friendship of the pious and prayerful with whom acquaintance has been formed, the conviction of personal usefulness in the Gospel, and the hope of instrumentally spreading it abundantly in all the earth; and above all, from the persuasion, in view of the

prophecies and commandments of God our Saviour, that *His will was done.*"

At the close of the session of the Convention, he permitted himself a brief period of rest, when he made another tour through Illinois, Tennessee, and other States, where he met with much success. The collection of money, however, was not the primary object in Mr. Bennett's Western agency. A false Calvinism was extensively prevalent in the churches, producing much opposition to Christian exertion for the salvation of sinners, whether at home or abroad. It paralyzed the active power of religion. A proper understanding of his usefulness there will require, at this point, a more full view of that spirit than has been before given. He thus writes to the secretary, Dr. Bolles, from Alabama, February 22, 1836:

"That you may have some idea of the moral atmosphere which I am compelled to breathe, I will begin by quoting *verbatim* from the minutes of the Richland Creek Association, the following preamble and resolution:

"'Whereas this Association views with pain and Christian abhorrence the rise, the progress, and deleterious effects of various societies, or combinations of men, claiming the specious and

flattering names of benevolence and humanity, such as the Missionary and Abolition Societies, and many others actuated by the same spirit, the work of which combinations we believe to be subversive of all good order, peace, and quiet of both civil and political, as well as religious society:

"'Be it, therefore, resolved by this Association unanimously, that we hereby declare to all men our sincere, undeviating, and decided opposition to all and every such society, whose ways and works are wasting and destroying the happiness of society in every part of our otherwise happy country; and we sincerely desire our brethren at large, and particularly advise the churches we represent, to hold all such societies in utter detestation and at a distance; and further, we advise that the churches uncompromisingly use the discipline of the Gospel on all and every of their members who may be known in any way to countenance such unscriptural and disorganizing societies or combinations.' The above passed the Association September, 1835."

This was not a solitary instance. Many were the religious bodies in which similar sentiments were avowed. Antinomianism, which has since much declined, from lack of essential vitality, was

then at the zenith of its power in the Southwest. Immense numbers of professing Christians were involved in this error, among whom were some men possessing great excellencies of character, and swaying an extensive influence. From a memorandum made at this time, a still more definite statement of these pernicious views is taken:

"I spent twenty-four hours with Rev. A. H., a chief man in the Association, and found him impressed with the conviction that the commission to preach the Gospel to every creature was fulfilled by the Apostles, and is now binding only as it requires pastors to feed the flock; that the Gospel is not a means of salvation to the impenitent, for the heathen may be saved without it (for which he quotes Romans ii. 14, *These, having not the law, are a law unto themselves*, etc.); that no proof is found in the Bible that religion has any thing to do with *money*, and those who receive it come more or less under the idea of hirelings. These views are connected in his mind with the opinion that all the efforts of the Church are unauthorized in Scripture, and have been introduced within fifty years, since which the Church has gone back and become degenerate, and saints are not as numerous now as in the days of persecution and

darkness in the valleys of Piedmont: for the devil has turned Christian. With these views he associates an humble, conscientious spirit, and seems much distressed that good men should be so blinded as he deems them to be."

"Effort" and "Anti-effort" were the distinctive badges of religious parties in the South and West, producing frequent divisions of churches and associations, with much contention and violence. Many of the churches were closed against him in his earlier tours, and much misrepresentation and personal abuse were met. One instance among many is thus related: "On Lord's day an effort was made by Rev. ——, with two other brethren, to prevent my preaching, because I was a missionary man. More than an hour was spent in debating the subject with those who took my part, while most of the congregation were in the open air and cold, rambling about, and no acts of worship were performed until after one o'clock, P. M. When another person had preached, an appeal was made by a friendly minister to the assembly, who, with the exception of about three, voted to have me address them." When he was excluded from the ordinary house of worship, such was his reputation, the citizens would frequently throw open to him the court-house, or other public building in the

place, where, by his eminently Christian spirit, lucid statement of facts, and fervid appeals for Christ and a perishing world, he would put to shame the opposition; and (to use an expression then common in describing his efforts) he "took away the doors, posts, bars, and all from the enemy's citadel."

For this work Mr. Bennett possessed peculiar adaptation. His soul was glowing with missionary ardor. His acquaintance with the Scriptures was intimate and practical. His mental resources were always at ready command, and an apt Scripture quotation, or a well-turned reply, often covered an objector with no small confusion. To this was added a holy earnestness and benignity of manner, which at once impressed and attracted the hearts of his opposers. His services were eagerly sought by active Christians everywhere, as conducing to a deeper tone of spirituality in the churches, and a more just sense of responsibility respecting a lost world. Rev. Dr. Howell, then of Nashville, Tenn., thus wrote to him in reference to these labors:

"I am delighted to hear that you will probably be at the next meeting of our State convention. Be assured, should the Lord favor us so much as to direct your way to us at that time, we shall feel

grateful to Him, and receive you with open hearts and hands. I think you ought to labor much in the West, especially in the Southwest. Your collections for the good cause in Burmah may not be quite so large, but the deficit will be more than made up to the cause we love, by the good you will do us."

God has associated the work of foreign missions with the highest prosperity of the churches in the home field. The auspicious change which has been passing over the spiritual character of many of the churches in the Southwest, though attributable to no single agency, is largely a result of Mr. Bennett's labors. The striking views he presented of the great commission, the stirring appeals he made in behalf of the heathen world, the expositions he gave of the purpose of the Gospel, as indicated in the prophecies and in the teachings of Christ—illustrated and enforced, as the whole was, by his Christian temper, his earnest zeal, and his life of irreproachable godliness—gave a new direction to Christian thought, and awoke in the hearts of thousands the more active impulses of religious character. The compassion awakened among Christians for the distant heathen, and the obligation distinctly presented to send them the Gospel, in turn awoke an interest in the perishing condition

of the ungodly around them; and the tears of pity falling over the miseries of a lost world, were often the precursors of a refreshing from the presence of the Spirit of God, and the blessed ingathering of a revival.

An extract from a letter written at Lawrenceburgh, Ind., at this period, addressed to his son, Dolphas Bennett, in which he notes some valuable thoughts in Sidney's "Life of Rowland Hill," will be here read with interest.

"In coming down the Ohio I read Wm. Sidney's 'Life of Rowland Hill.' The devotion, zeal, and activity of Mr. Hill are worthy of imitation: every good man will find his own heart strengthened by such an example. There were a few choice sentences which I marked, and some of them I will mention. 'If you wish to gain a character as a minister of the word of life, you must first lose it entirely in the esteem of the world, and then gain it by your upright and holy zeal, by your complete deadness to the world, that you may give yourself wholly to the work of the ministry, and spend and be spent in the sacred cause. Half-way work is odious in every profession, but in the work of God most abominable: such as honor Christ shall be honored of Him. You have sufficient knowledge of the Gospel to know that it is

a glorious Gospel, while the thin, meager religion of the world is beneath contempt.' Again, 'The messenger of the Gospel becomes the truest patriot, when he is most diligently employed in winning his fellow-countrymen to the religion of Jesus Christ, whose precepts obeyed from the heart are the firmest pillars of the social system, and the surest antidote to anarchy or misrule.'

"Mr. Hill felt his dependence much, as every good man will, upon the Holy Spirit's influence in the ministrations of the Gospel. 'There is something,' says he, 'in preaching the Gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, which I long to get at. The nearer we live to God, the better we are enabled to serve Him. Oh how I hate my own noise when I have nothing to make a noise about! Heavenly wisdom creates heavenly utterance.' He said he liked Dr. Ryland's advice to his pupils: *Mind, no sermon is of any value, or likely to be useful, which has not the three R's in it: Ruin by the fall; Redemption by Christ; Regeneration by the Holy Spirit.* A minister having observed to him that, notwithstanding the fault found with his dry sermons, there were still hopes of their usefulness, for Samson had slain the Philistines with the jaw-bone of an ass—'True,' he replied, 'but it was a *moist* jaw-bone.' Mr. Sid-

ney utters a good sentiment on doctrinal controversy: 'Let Calvinist and Arminian join in one common acknowledgment that they never should have sought God by nature, had he not first sought them by grace—that the only way to eternal life is through the all-sufficient atonement of a dying Saviour, and the only evidence of our interest in His blood is a heart sanctified by His Spirit and dedicated to His glory.'

"But, my dear son, while we are looking at other men, desiring to copy their *virtues*, how much need we have of great grace to overcome our *own vices!* To elevate our own habits of thinking, feeling, acting, that we may continually be assimilating to the likeness of Christ, is of vast moment for usefulness in the church or in the world."

A letter from him in Kentucky, 1836, addressed to his nephew, Asa Bennett,* whose heart was then turning towards the ministry of the Gospel among the heathen, is in part here inserted: reference is

* This excellent young man, after pursuing a course of study at the Hamilton Literary and Theological Institution, with reference to the missionary work in Burmah, fell a victim to consumption before entering his contemplated field. His death was in the calm assured hope of Christ; it is yet profoundly felt in a large circle, who appreciated the virtues which adorned his character.

also made to his niece, a young lady of much promise, who was wasting in consumption.

"It distresses me much to hear of C.'s state of health; but as God has ordered it, all is right, and we should submit. Youth, beauty, intelligence, activity, and hope are cut down and wasted in her. This must be another great affliction to the dear family, who have already suffered so much from the same disease. The Saviour said, *What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.* Draw near to God; cast all your care upon Him, for *He careth for you.* Let this be your consolation. Should C. be yet alive, tell her my heart's desire and prayer to God for her is, that she may be saved. The blessed Saviour died for *sinners;* tell her to look to Him, to cast herself at His feet, and say, *Lord, save, or I perish.* It is safe trusting in His grace, and His power to save is infinite. May she shine before the throne of God, with her parents, and brothers, and sisters, and with all the saints.

"You speak of trials in relation to the ministry in heathen lands. I would say, pray much, and examine your heart carefully. To labor for God anywhere is an honor, and to be sent by him to teach the Gentiles is a distinguished honor, but a very difficult task. I know not why you may not

be called to serve God as a missionary, but *all* who think they are called to that work should be careful to know that the call is of God. The missionary is like a man upon the top of a mountain, in the view of all the world, with the eye of God and the enmity of devils directed towards him. He occupies one of the most responsible places in the universe: if he succeed not, it will be a great defeat; but if he does, it will be a great honor. In view of all this, how important it is that a man should know himself, his *inmost self*, touching all the motives and desires of his heart, that he may be thoroughly acquainted with the principles which stimulate him to action, and understandingly decide upon his course! for, not only his own happiness is involved in the decision, but the well-being of many others, upon whom his course will have influence."

The views Mr. Bennett took of his work were eminently spiritual, and throughout his official communications the pervading tone is that of humble reliance upon God. He thus concludes a report of his labors, February 22, 1837, for the winter just closing: "The ministration of the Gospel among the people almost daily, the information spread over a wide extent of country, which will do good in future, together with the

moral and religious influence set in motion in the denomination, have more than compensated for all the toil, fatigue, privation, and danger encountered in making this laborious tour. It becomes me also to acknowledge the goodness of God all the way, and his special mercy, in many instances, in preserving my life, limbs, and health amidst exposures from high waters, bad roads, dangerous ice, inclement seasons, and bewilderment in dreary forests and prairies. But most of all are my thanks due to God for the light of His countenance, the influences of His Spirit, and the supports of His grace in the discharge of the important duty assigned me."

Many instances occurred, during his tours, of remarkable providential preservation, in which he could clearly see the hand of God. On his way from Erie, Penn., to Cleveland, Ohio, a journey which it was then necessary to perform by stage, the coach was twice overset in one night, occasioned, in both instances, by the driver's intemperance and culpable ignorance of the way. In the last instance, the horses were in rapid motion, descending a dangerous hill, and the force with which the coach struck the ground was such as to cause it to slide some distance on the ground after being overset. He was sitting on the

forward seat, having only the curtain between him and the earth, and that was badly torn in the concussion.

The labor and exposures of this winter, however, proved too severe for him. Always unwilling to fail in his appointments, a hoarseness, contracted in this inclement season, finally induced what seemed to be a serious affection of the lungs. Weakness at length compelled him to relinquish all effort for several weeks, and apprehensions were felt that it might terminate his life. But he so far recovered as to reach Pittsburg, whence he wrote: "Although this sickness is to me a sore calamity, and falls heavily on the mission cause, yet it has not been lost upon me. My heart has been much stirred up, instructed, and humbled, all which it greatly needed. Sweet and interesting views of a Saviour have cheered me, and caused me to hope that even so vile a wretch as I may yet be holy as *God is holy*. That is the standard of moral excellence to which all must come who enter heaven. Hence the value of a Saviour's merits, the preciousness of His atoning blood, the priceless worth of His imputed righteousness, and the importance of His Spirit dwelling within us, to quicken the affections, strengthen and direct the desires in prayer, and comfort and sanctify the whole soul."

Though he did not entirely recover his wonted health until the close of summer, the intermediate time was spent in active exertion, chiefly in central New York. Autumn found him again in the West, passing through Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois, "addressing both churches and individuals on the claims of missions, and, whenever practicable, attending public meetings of conventions and other religious bodies." The condition of the field had greatly changed since he first entered it. Opposition had in many places entirely ceased, and where he was driven away, or coldly received, in earlier years, the people now met him gladly. He wrote from Illinois: "The ministering brethren are now favorable, at least such as have influence with the people, and there are revivals in many of the churches, or have lately been, which gives things an entirely new aspect. In no year since the commencement of my agency, have I seen so much evidence of strong, united, and deep-toned religious feeling, putting itself forth in benevolent effort, as in this: in view of which I would thank God, devoutly hoping the signs of the times will brighten, until the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord."

On returning from the West, his time was occu-

pied chiefly in the interior of the State of New York and in Connecticut, addressing the churches with his usual success, until September, 1839. He then returned westward, and from Springfield, Illinois, thus writes Dr. Bolles, Sept. 26:

"In dating my letter, I am forcibly reminded of the flight of time, and the brevity of human life. *This* day commences my sixtieth year on earth. Fifty-nine years' time have been allotted me in the world, forty-one and a half of them have passed since I acknowledged allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ as King, and nearly thirty-five since engaging in the ministry. How much ought I to have known by this time under such a Teacher! How much ought I to have done in obedience to such a King! How much more I might *now* be able to do, had I always been what Christ required me to be! How much is lost by sin! *But thanks be to God, there is perfection in prospect, through the blood of the Lamb.* Oh, my soul, praise Him! therefore *praise* Him! praise the great Redeemer's name!"

While absent upon this tour, he received intelligence of the illness of his son, Cephas Bennett, in Burmah, and the intended return of that excellent missionary to this country for a season, seeking restoration. To this he replied: "The

loss of my son's health, and his consequent return, is grievous to my heart; yet I hope God will be glorified in him, whether it be by life or death. I should be happy to *see* my children, but more happy to *hear* they were turning the heathen to God from dumb idols, and laboring successfully in health, as the instruments of God in gathering in His elect." And when, early in 1840, his son reached this country, the father, who was laboring in Kentucky, could not be induced to hasten his return, remarking, "It would give me great satisfaction to come home and enjoy the pleasures of domestic life with my dear family, but the cause here demands my attention." The interests of the Redeemer's kingdom seemed to surpass in his view the claims of all earthly objects; and though possessing a heart glowing with the warmest natural affection, love to Christ burned there with yet higher intensity.

CHAPTER XI.

TOURS EAST AND WEST.

To follow the venerated man, of whose life the memorials are here gathered, through all the details of his numerous tours, would swell this volume beyond its appropriate limit. Nor is it needful. The purpose of a biography is to give a picture of the man, which is often more fitly done by a few characteristic incidents than by crowded circumstantial detail.

The later years of his life were employed chiefly in New York and the adjacent States, though a few months of each year were commonly spent in the West. Much importance was attached to his annual visit to that region. A multitude of new churches were springing up amidst the rapidly growing communities there. The worldly thrift and enterprise, so characteristic of the West, and often so disastrous to the vitality and purity of the churches, required the influence of those elevating, ennobling views associated with giving the Gospel to the world. A missionary spirit needed to be

early infused, and a system of benevolent contribution established. This was the peculiar mission of Mr. Bennett. His success is not to be measured by the amount of funds collected. His was a work of faith: he laid the foundations of missionary effort, on which others are rearing the superstructure. God by him opened springs of benevolence in the western churches, whose streams, at first small, but ever widening and deepening, will ultimately bear far and wide over the earth the peace and gladness of the Gospel.

The summer of 1840, with the winter succeeding, he passed in his agency in the Middle and Eastern States, inspiring, as usual, interest everywhere in the missionary work by his heart-stirring appeals. On some of the tours of this period, he was accompanied by Rev. Cephas Bennett, whom he was permitted to greet again, after an absence of more than ten years among the heathen in Burmah. After attending the triennial session of the Convention at Baltimore, April, 1841, he passed over the mountains to meet with several important public bodies in Ohio and Kentucky. From the latter State he thus writes Dr. Peck, secretary of the Board: "Very little has been collected for foreign missions the year past, especially beyond Ohio, and from the scarcity of

money I fear little will be done for the year to come. I made three attempts at collection in L.: one in the first church, one in the convention, and one in the colored church. The last was thirty-two dollars, and more than both the others. At the close of the sermon in the colored church, Rev. Mr. A., their pastor, himself a colored man, after making some excellent remarks, concluded by saying: 'When we have had our monthly concerts, I have noticed there was often a groan of approbation over the house, as desire was expressed for particular things, especially when the *heathen* were mentioned; and now I want you to come forward and lay down your money, or I shall think you did not groan *honestly*.' Perhaps," continues Mr. Bennett, "there are some white people who will need to groan again, or pay more money before all will be done right. But we will bless God for His mercy hitherto received, and devoutly pray for greater displays of His power."

Great agitation respecting the institution of slavery existed at this time in the churches, both North and South. While some of the former regarded the Board of Missions with distrust, charging them as the abettors of slavery, and clamorously demanded a distinct denunciation of that

institution, and an entire separation from the southern churches; many in the latter were denouncing the Board as ultra-abolition, and requiring some definite statement or act which would identify them officially with that obnoxious institution. Public religious gatherings in all parts of the country were filled with exciting discussions upon this subject, and agitators, on either side, were passing among the churches, stirring up a spirit of opposition. Collections were much impeded, as many forgot, in the wild excitement, their obligations to give the Gospel to the heathen. It required much watchfulness and wisdom, in these circumstances, to keep steadily before Christians the claims of a perishing world; and in the midst of frequent and violent opposition, to mingle patience and gentleness with that firmness which the crisis demanded. The influence of Mr. Bennett at this period was of great value. Ever kind and conciliatory, though uncompromising where he thought the truth at stake, his counsels often calmed the agitation, and directed the eye from sectional jealousies and lower interests to the one great object, around which he would concentrate the energies of the people of God. The veneration universally felt for his piety, the holy fervor with which he plead for the heathen, as well as

the wisdom of his course, contributed much to the preservation of the missionary interest during that stormy period, until the final separation of the northern and southern churches in their missionary operations, in 1845, restored some degree of tranquillity.

The summer of 1841, as well as the winter following, he employed mostly in the State of New York. It was, however, a time of great pecuniary embarrassment, which, conspiring with the above-mentioned occasion of dissension, caused an unusual falling off in the amount contributed. Of this he wrote to Dr. Bolles, from Rochester, Feb. 5, 1842, just before that excellent man was compelled by enfeebled health to relinquish his post, so long and honorably filled, as secretary of the Board:

"I had anticipated sending from this place nearly fifteen hundred dollars, but shall fail. The cause, however, will not fail. God, the *ever-blessed God*, will accomplish His purposes of mercy among the heathen, and when we have done all we *can*, we have done our duty. I told the brethren at the Monroe Association, it was folly to complain of hard times. It was not so in Christ's kingdom: the times were easy there. The pressure was in another kingdom, and because they had put their money in

the wrong place. No one in the country had put his money into the Lord's treasury, and failed on that account. In all the States through which I had passed, and among the thousand bankruptcies which had occurred, and among them hundreds of church members—among all, not one could be found who attributed his ruin to his giving in the cause of God. No—it was putting his funds in the wrong place, where the blessing of God could not rest upon it.

"Our hope is in the Lord, and may His Spirit and presence be with the Board and its officers. May their feet be guided in wisdom, and the work of their hands established. Our national councils seem to be distracted; still the cause of God in the earth will prosper to its consummation. This is cheering. *God is a refuge for us. And blessed be His glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory.*"

His steps were again directed westward in the following autumn, visiting Ohio, Michigan, and Kentucky. From Maysville, Ky., he thus addresses Mrs. Bennett, under date of Dec. 10, 1842:

"This is dedicated to you, as the companion of my life. Forty years last month we engaged to each other, to suffer and enjoy in union, amidst

the changes which should come over us. Our hope was in God, and we have not been disappointed; for God has been faithful, and His hand has helped us at all times. His promises have been the support and comfort of our souls, while His word has been food and strength, wisdom and consolation. Truly we can say, Christ has been *precious*, *very precious*. How often have we found pardon and peace, when as guilty we have gone before His throne!

"And now when I look back upon all the way the Lord has led us these forty years in the wilderness, to prove us, and see what was in our hearts, whether we would serve Him or not, I think much has been disclosed in my heart offensive to Him, and dishonorable to me; and *I pray Him to forgive*, and still bless us both, while we remain below. I hope you find access to the throne of God from day to day, and leaving your burdens with Him, are passing the time in patience; for while you are *patient in tribulation*, and continuing instant in prayer, you can rejoice in hope—a hope which maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

His labors were continued through the winter in different parts of the West, without interruption.

No record of them, however, is now found, except in occasional letters; from one of which, addressed to A. M. Beebee, Esq., Utica, 1843, from Kentucky, we make the following extracts:

"My health is good, generally. My life, *which has always been in God's hand*, was again put in jeopardy on the 14th inst., by being thrown suddenly from my carriage upon the Macadamized rock road. No bones were broken, but the bruise was dreadful. I fell into the hands of sympathizing friends, both in the family and the physician. After being confined to my room and bed several days, my labors were resumed, but much pain is suffered yet in the side and shoulder.

"Some time since I heard a leading Campbellite discourse on the first chapter of Colossians. When he came to verse 14, *By whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins*, he paused a moment and said: 'Some people think the *blood of Christ* has something to do with the *forgiveness of sins*, and,' said he, 'I have no doubt they are honest in thinking so, but they are *greatly* mistaken. The blood of Christ has nothing to do in putting away sins, under the new covenant, any more than the blood of bulls and goats had under the Old Testament. The blood ratifies the covenant, and we must *obey* its commands to be

saved.' Is not this do and live? or rather, *doing and dying!*

"A gentleman of high standing handed me the following statement in writing a few days ago: 'I heard a sermon in Frankfort, in Jan., 1843, delivered by Mr. Fall (who is a prominent Campbellite minister), on the subject, in part, of the new birth, in which he stated the new birth was an outward ordinance altogether. He said, a man might have faith, repentance, a new heart, and a good conscience, yet he had not experienced the new birth. He said baptism was a figurative death. The last breath an individual drew before he was put into the water he was out of the kingdom, while under the water his breath was stopped, and the first breath he drew after he was raised from the water he was in the kingdom and a child of God.'

"Mistaken views of human depravity occasion much of this error, in my opinion. Man is not viewed as a poor, bankrupt vagabond, while in sin—utterly wretched, helpless, and miserable—lying in the wicked one, dead in trespasses and sins—justly deserving eternal damnation—and needing such help as *only God* can give him in Jesus Christ, according to the riches of His grace. Blessed be God for a Redeemer that can save sin-

ners! This is the precious truth which comforts my heart amidst the toils and solicitude of life. Christ is *all* my confidence still, after forty-five years of experience. I have no righteousness to mention but *His* righteousness, and I have to go in the strength of the Lord God from day to day. My prayer is, *Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not, till I have showed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to every one that is to come.*"

The missionary meeting at Hamilton, during the commencement anniversaries of Aug., 1843, will be remembered with deep interest for many years. An immense assembly was gathered in a large, shaded grove, forming an amphitheatre—a spot hallowed in earlier days by the prayers of the lamented Thomas. Rev. Eugenio Kincaid, returned missionary from Burmah, had preached, depicting with graphic power the signal triumphs of grace in that heathen land, holding the vast auditory intensely interested for nearly two hours and a half. No ordinary man could have safely followed him. Mere reasoning, or learning, or oratory would have seemed cold trifling. It required a soul, elevated and capacious, burning with love to Christ, and melting with compassion for a perishing world. Mr. Bennett was the preacher

chosen. He selected as his theme the words of the Apostle, *Brethren, pray for us;* and an unction from the Holy One seemed to rest upon him. He spoke as one fresh from the throne of God, and standing beneath the cross of the great Redeemer. The sermon, though in the midst of other exercises of thrilling interest, left an impression not yet effaced from the hearts of the multitudes then assembled.

Early in 1844 we find him again in Michigan, where, for the first time, he was attacked with the ague, so common in the West. By this, however, he was not laid aside from his work, but pursued it with usual ardor, until by powerful remedies the disease was at length broken up.

The Southern churches having withdrawn from the General Convention, a special meeting of that body was convened, Nov., 1845, in the city of New York, for the purpose of reorganization; when a new constitution was adopted, and the society took the name of "The American Baptist Missionary Union." Dr. Judson, the veteran missionary, was providentially present, in feeble health, and having recently, on his homeward voyage, deposited the lifeless remains of Mrs. Judson in their grave on the Island of St. Helena. Deep emotion was experienced at the sight of the vener-

able man of God, whose career for thirty years had been marked with a noble devotion, amidst sufferings and labors for Christ. "Father Bennett" was requested to address the Throne of Grace. A live coal from off the heavenly altar seemed to have touched his lips. A petition so fervent and touching, carrying the assembly with it, as it were, into the presence of God, and spreading the wants and interests of the occasion at the foot of the Throne, has seldom been heard from the lips of man. It appeared to be from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Every heart was melted and borne irresistibly with it, and the immense assembly was bathed in tears.

After the organization of the Missionary Union, much dissatisfaction was felt with that article of the constitution which prescribes the terms of membership. Many preferred the principle of church representation to that of life-membership which had been adopted. The discussion in many sections was warm, and not seldom acrimonious. It was seriously apprehended that a rupture would be occasioned by it. The subject, however, was finally disposed of, by referring it for final decision to the whole body of members; the result of which was a large majority in favor of the life-membership basis. During the progress of this contro-

versy, which continued several years, Mr. Bennett's labors were unremitting to calm agitation and prevent the dissatisfaction from prejudicing the interests of the missions. The harmonious co-operation of the churches in the Union, which remains, for the most part, unbroken in New York and the Western States, is to be attributed in no small degree to the happy influence he exerted.

To the Baptist ecclesiastical polity, especially the independence of the churches, he was warmly and conscientiously attached, and his views on this subject had remarkable distinctness. This gave to his counsels great value, as he passed among the churches and participated in the deliberations of Councils, Associations, and other public religious bodies. The following incidents will illustrate at once the opinions he entertained, and the practical use he made of them.

During his early ministry, a Presbyterian clergyman, with whom he was on terms of intimacy, once remarked, what a desirable gradation of courts the Presbyterian church polity furnished from one to another, to which difficulties might be referred for adjustment; and wished to know what the Baptists did when their *only* tribunal—the church in which the difficulty originated—

failed to reach a satisfactory decision. He had to reply that there was no way but to "hang it up" for adjudication at the day of final account. Mr. B. then asked him, in turn, what they did when their Session failed to give satisfaction. He replied that their resort was to the Presbytery. But, rejoined Mr. B., suppose the Presbytery in like manner fails? The appeal then lies to the Synod, was the answer. But suppose the Synod fail too? The next resort is to the General Assembly, was of course answered; and when Mr. B. inquired for the resort beyond this, the Presbyterian brother, already anticipating the end to which he was coming, pleasantly replied, that he supposed they would have to "hang it up" like their Baptist brethren. Mr. B. then wished to know if it would not have saved much trouble, expense, and asperity of feeling, if they could have "hung it up" after the first trial. He then gave an account of a difficulty which originated in a joke about a member of a church, at the South, walking home with a lady whose husband was not a member of the church. It was at first of no account, but one joke originated another; and they together grew into something serious. The members of the church and community took sides with one party or the other, and the difficul-

ty, like all others commencing in nothing and receiving constant accretions from the spirit which they generate in their progress, proved incapable of adjustment, and after travelling the whole round of tribunals, had to be "hung up" in reserve for the Judgment, both by the original parties and those who had attached themselves to either side in the progress of the trials.

He had frequent occasion to correct errors on this subject, and always did it with great kindness, and in a manner to leave good feeling behind. At a State Convention in one of the Western States, he noticed at one time a great disposition, in the circles of brethren in which he moved, to bring up for discussion the subject of secret societies and pass strong resolutions upon it. He went among them privately, and sought to dissuade them from bringing it up. It was not proper, he said, and the result would always be bad for other bodies to anticipate and control the action of the churches, by passing general resolutions which they could apply to no particular case. He thought these societies bad in their influence, but that the individual churches ought to deal with those who went off to such organizations, untrammelled by the decisions of the Convention. The subject was not introduced.

His usefulness on these tours, as a sound adviser and clear expositor of biblical principles of church polity, will long be felt in its influence in different parts of the Union.

The years 1846–7 were employed mainly in the State of New York, with occasional visits to his original field in the West. Many mass missionary meetings were attended during this period, where, with undiminished ardor, he plead the cause of the heathen. He also made a trip to Ohio, in company with Rev. Mr. Osgood, returned missionary, during the spring of 1847, the results of which were highly beneficial. In the report of his labors, given May, 1848, for the year then closed, it is stated that he had visited one hundred and twelve churches in New York (some of them twice), with twelve Associations; besides spending April and May chiefly in Ohio, and September and October in Wisconsin and Michigan. He had travelled about eight thousand three hundred and fifty-two miles, and preached two hundred and fifty-two sermons, besides addressing different assemblies, on other occasions, nearly as many times more.

It was thus he toiled, while his head was already whitened for the grave, and his frame bowed under the weight of almost seventy years.

The work was God's. The interests of a dying world lay upon his heart. The reward was near and glorious.

CHAPTER XII.

ILLNESS AND DEATH.

The first intimation of the presence of the painful disease, which at length terminated fatally, was given at Hamilton, during the Commencement anniversaries of Madison University. The excitement respecting the removal of that institution to a more western location was then at its height, and rendered the occasion one of deep, and often painful, interest. This may have been the occasion of the attack at that time; the causes, however, are to be found in the long-continued privations and exposures necessarily incident to his agency. The disease then speedily yielded to medical treatment, and he was able in a few days to resume travelling.

Early in the next month, he was called to preach the funeral sermon of Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Kendrick, who, after a protracted period of excruciating suffering, under which the eminent servant of God was signally supported, died in peace-

ful triumph at the village of Hamilton. The text assigned him by his departed friend was from the forty-third Psalm: *Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.* The occasion deeply affected him; and from the fulness of his capacious soul, he set forth "The Christian's grounds of consolation and triumph," with an ardor and unction which will not soon be forgotten by his auditors. He felt himself standing over the grave of an early and long-tried friend, with whom were associated many of the most precious recollections of life, while his own enfeebled frame reminded him, also, of approaching dissolution. Of this event, he thus writes to Mrs. Bennett: "So, then, that good man has received an honorable discharge forever from all his sufferings. I am looking with pleasure and strong hope, that soon you and I shall also be removed from this state of tumult and trouble—of privation and toil—of imperfection and sorrow. May it be alike safe and honorable for us!"

Soon after, he felt constrained, by increasing feebleness, to propose a partial release from his agency. "The labor and responsibility," he remarks, "are becoming a burden, in prospect of a cold winter, with windy and stormy days and

nights, when appointments *must be met*, or the cause suffer. My age and infirmities are the only plea. My heart is in the work, and I am willing to do what I can; but what was once easy for me in travelling and preaching, and visiting from house to house, and from town to town, is now impossible." The Executive Committee did not, however, release him, but left it discretional with him to labor or refrain, as health would permit.

In the view of advancing age, he thus wrote to Rev. Alvin Bennett, November 29, 1848:

"The journey of life with us will soon be over, and the joys and sorrows incident to the way may now be mentioned freely. My own experience tells me of much for which I have to mourn, and over which to battle hard, that I may be a victor at last. For 'he that *overcometh* shall inherit all things.' It is difficult to overcome Satan and all his devices; they are artful and powerful. Then the world comes in at the door of the enemy, but in the garb of friendship, and seems to have a *demand* on our time and attention, carrying us along with its spirit in search for its perishable treasures and seductive pleasures. . . And last, but not least, self, beloved self, enters and claims the throne within. Now, what should I do, what

could I do without a Saviour, and such a Saviour as is Jesus Christ, who receiveth sinners, and maketh them holy, and crowneth them with glory and honor? In His name, and by His blessing, I am still in the field, laboring to promote righteousness and truth in the earth."

A few weeks during the autumn of this year were spent, as often before, in the West. On his return, he addressed a letter to Rev. William Palmer, Norwich, Conn., December 16, from which we take the following paragraph:

> "'God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform;'

and we may add, in a *majestic* way; yea, more, in a *merciful* way. The greatest wonders are seen in the works of His grace in this fallen world, preparing citizens for heaven; and it seems to me, if I am permitted citizenship there at last, it will be the greatest wonder of all. Still, my heart is not affected as much with the truth as it ought to be. I fear I am depending more on past experience than upon present communion with God, for my evidence of acceptance with Christ. I know not how it may be with you, but I find in *old age* a disposition to sink into a habit or form of religion, which I fear I may substitute for the

living principle, and so deceive myself. Well, *we* shall soon know our future destiny; and it will be peculiarly joyful, if we may be *near* and *like* our Lord Jesus Christ. *That will be heaven indeed.*"

This winter and the summer of 1849 were employed in the State of New York, with his accustomed zeal and success; and during the closing months of the year, he performed one of the severest journeys in the West which it had fallen to his lot to experience. He was accompanied on this trip by Rev. Mr. Bronson, returned missionary from Assam. Of this tour, he remarks: "My health has been good during the whole journey, except fatigue from excess of travel. The meetings were so near together in time, and so far apart in distance, there was no rest. I was absent from home forty-eight days, in which I travelled a little over three thousand miles, and attended meetings twenty-four days, or parts of days, in that time. God has blessed us in our journeyings, and to His name be everlasting praise."

The venerable "Father Peck" closed his long and useful life December 15, 1849. According to an arrangement made between them many years before, that the survivor should minister at the grave of the first deceased, Mr. Bennett was call-

ed to preach the funeral sermon of this, another of his early co-laborers. His text was Acts xiii. 36: *David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep:* when he paid a just and feeling tribute to the memory of his excellent friend. They had been associated intimately through life: first as pastors in the Madison Association, when they regularly exchanged pulpits once a year; and subsequently as agents, the one of the Foreign, the other of the Home Mission Society. At our national anniversaries, these two venerable fathers in the ministry, for many years, were always seen, calm amidst agitation, wise in counsel, fervent in spirit, and mighty in prayer before the Throne. The death of this loved fellow-servant of God came to him as a premonition of his own approaching departure.

A letter to Rev. William Palmer, in April, from Homer, remarks: "We have buried two of our *old citizens* the past week. Those of our age are becoming scarce. Our brother Eleazar has gone to rest before his brethren: he went *quick, but safe.* Brother Peck, of Cazenovia, has also laid off his armor, and at the Saviour's call gone up to his habitation, where he will ever be with the Lord. I believe now there is but one man left among the ministry of New York, who was

in that office here when I entered the State. Life seems very short, but the prospect is not gloomy."

Another of the same month, to his only remaining brother, Rev. Alvin Bennett, thus records the reflections of this period:

"How few families have more reason of gratitude than ours, for the distinguished mercy of God! Parents pious: with this is connected the Christian education of their children. They, in turn, grow up all professing godliness. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, they have lived and died in faith; or are living, with good hope, through grace, of meeting each other, their parents, and the Saviour, in heaven. My times are in God's hand, and will be consummated soon.

"In reviewing the way the Lord has led me, I find much cause for astonishment, both as regards my disobedience and ingratitude to Him, and His compassion and patience towards me. Well may I say, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and *forget* not all His benefits.' I hope, however, God has blessed me with His approving presence even this winter, notwithstanding all my backslidings from Him. I have enjoyed some sweet seasons in preaching the glorious Gospel of Christ, while

laboring to persuade men to aid in preaching it to others. I have found it good to draw near to God in prayer, and it has been with sweet satisfaction I have had the high honor at a *throne of grace* of pouring out my soul before Him. One thing is a comfort to me in my old age: it is, that I have been counted worthy to be put into the ministry, and that I have not been left of God so to wander from that ministry, as to engage in politics, or worldly business, or become connected with any secret societies, so as to be brought under their power. To feel that I am independent of the world, and permitted to call God my Father, Jesus Christ my Saviour, the Holy Spirit my Comforter, and Heaven my home—is enough. I am satisfied, and looking up, can say, *Father, Thy will be done.*"

At the opening of summer, he made his last visit to the Western States, accompanied by Rev. Mr. Haswell, returned missionary from Burmah. The tour was successful, but he experienced a recurrence of the ague, which, with a severe and painful inflammation in one of his limbs, compelled him on returning to Homer to desist from active labor. To Rev. Edward Bright, Home Secretary of the Union, he wrote, July 16:

"I sometimes become exceedingly uneasy, say-

ing, What shall we do to meet the outfit of that blessed cargo of missionaries* now about to sail, and supply the current expenses of the year? Then I look up to God, who has the hearts of all men in His hand, and submit the matter to Him. Faith in His purpose and promise tends to give peace to my mind. So here I am, old and infirm, compelled to submit to the providence of God concerning me: still, I think I rejoice to be in His hand, as the clay is in the hand of the potter. You are now exceedingly busy preparing for the embarkation of the missionaries. May God's presence go with them to their fields of labor! Could I see them, I would say,

'Now, here's my heart, and here's my hand,'

to *labor* now in His work, and meet you *there*, above, where together and forever we may bow before the Lord our Redeemer, and with all our hearts praise Him who has counted us worthy *to labor and suffer for His sake. Oh, it is an honor.*"

Again, July 22, he wrote in reference to the same event: "To-day, I suppose, is filled up with

* Rev. Eugenio Kincaid, John Dawson, M. D., and their wives, designated to Ava or some other place in the interior of Burmah; Rev. Messrs. S. M. Whiting and William Ward, and their wives, with Miss M. S. Shaw, designated to Assam.

activity and anxiety connected with the departure of the missionaries. Well, if I were able to share any part of the labor, it would give me pleasure, as I think; and yet I know it is not according to the will of God, for His providence has otherwise ordered. It is a consolation to feel that the mission cause is under the immediate care and eye of the adorable Saviour, who has His elect subjects in all lands and among all languages, and they will be gathered in at the appointed time; for He hath purposed it. Also the means are all at His disposal, by which He will accomplish His design. If He has ought more for me to do, ability will be given me to effect it; but I know that He can carry forward His work to completion without me, and I ought not to repine. I am unworthy of the honor connected with such an enterprise. I only am troubled now in view of the past, lest He has laid me aside, being offended that I did not honor Him more, that I had no higher respect for His majesty, no more exalted views of His holiness and glory, and no greater measure of that self-loathing, hatred of sin, and confidence in Christ, which ought ever to dwell in the heart of a sinner, saved by the grace of God from deserved and eternal ruin."

His active work was now done. He expe-

rienced soon after a recurrence of the disease which had temporarily prostrated him at Hamilton, attended with great physical suffering. The severity of it passed away in a few days, but the complaint was never removed. Writing of it soon after, he remarked: "The affliction has been wholly confined to my body. *My soul has been at ease.* I could say with Samuel Pearce—

> 'Sweet affliction, sweet affliction,
> Singing as I wade to heaven.'

It seemed I was lifted up by a hair, and swung out into space, entirely beyond the reach of friends, or of medical influence, where I was held by an Almighty agency, and in doubt whether I would land again in this world or not. But oh! how sweet it was to be there! all was peace, for I was in the hand of my best Friend."

He made a brief visit to Saratoga Springs with apparently beneficial results to his general health, especially in removing the ague, which had long been upon him; but he left soon, anxious to attend to the interests of the Missionary Union in several associations about to assemble, where he became much exhausted. His last public effort, before any considerable body of his brethren in the ministry, was November 4, when he preached

the first annual sermon before the New York Baptist Union for Ministerial Education, at the opening of the University of Rochester—an institution of which he was one of the most generous founders, and in which to the last he took the liveliest interest. His theme on this occasion was, *The knowledge of God, the true basis and highest end of education:* in the discussion of which he unfolded the most impressive views of the indissoluble relation between godliness and true learning, and the necessity of sacred principles as the only foundation of the educational work.

He subsequently returned to Rochester, at the invitation of Dr. H. W. Dean, a warm personal friend, whose hospitality and medical attention he enjoyed for several weeks, and of whose unwearied kindness, with that of his family, he always entertained a most grateful sense. Several other eminent medical gentlemen of that city were also consulted, but human help had become powerless, except to alleviate suffering. Dr. Dean, in a letter to the writer, remarks: "At the time he first submitted his case to me, October, 1850, he was suffering from a disease of his digestive organs of a chronic character, just such as might be expected to result from his long-protracted habits of exposure to inclement weather, long fasting, and

the consequent evil of improper food untimely taken. This had provoked a more serious malady —an organic disease of the kidneys, which, with the certain prospect of a fatal issue, denied to us the *physician's comfort.* His sufferings were almost constant, and at times extreme. Allow me to add, that I have rarely witnessed more patience, submission, and uniform good feeling in suffering, than in our lamented 'Father Bennett.' He was a living testator to the worth of Christianity in a needy hour."

On his return to Homer, he continued gradually sinking. He thus addressed the Rev. Alvin Bennett, December 31, 1850:

"The date of this reminds me of the flight of time, and the close of the first half of the nineteenth century, in which great changes have taken place. Well, blessed be God for His goodness to us! The change of all changes, and the one by which we have been the most affected, was that in our affections, which occurred before the commencement of the present century. We go back to thrilling scenes in Mansfield for the cause of those hopes and efforts which have characterized our lives. That God to whom I then committed the keeping of my soul, has been my unfailing support; yea, He is the God of my life. Jesus

Christ, that precious Saviour, to me the chiefest among ten thousand, *was then and is now* the One altogther lovely."

His last meeting with the church in Homer, over which he so long presided, was at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, on the first Sabbath in February, the fifty-first anniversary of his public profession of Christ, when his emaciated countenance and tremulous voice gave to all sad premonitions of his approaching departure, and added sorrow to the deep solemnity of that occasion. Once a week his Christian brethren were accustomed to gather round him, to unite with him in prayer and receive his dying counsels; and many of those seasons will live in their remembrance till they join him in the skies. His house was frequently thronged by those, coming from far and near, who sought one more word of counsel before he should depart.

His mind was, from the first, calm and peaceful. The prospects before him were bright and blessed, and the rays of glory seemed to fall upon his soul with intenser brilliancy as he drew nearer the eternal world. There were no ecstasies, but a calm, sweet, unshaken confidence in the Redeemer. In one of the last conversations, he spoke to this effect: "More than fifty years ago I had a view

of God upon the throne. I saw that He ruled, and would rule in spite of me; and it was my greatest misery. I would gladly have hurled Him from His seat, if it had been in my power, but I could not. I saw that He was sovereign, and I hated Him; it was my terror and misery that I could not dethrone Him. But," he continued, "this winter I have enjoyed another view of God. I have seen Him upon the throne, and the sight has filled me with rejoicings. I love to see Him there. I am glad He is Sovereign. I love His character; I love His Gospel; I love His government; I would not have one alteration in His plan. All His ways are holy, just, and true; and they are just as I would have them. His sovereignty, which was once my greatest dread and anguish, is now the chief source of my comfort and hope." As a few friends had gathered round him, at the close of worship on Lord's Day, he remarked: "I do not know where I shall spend the next Sabbath. I am in hope soon to put off this old garment, and enter where I can worship God in the beauty of holiness."

The church in Homer was especially dear to him; and among his latest petitions those for the loved brethren there seemed to rise with peculiar fervor. When asked if there was any message he would

have the pastor bear them as his dying counsels, he replied: "I have been delivering my message for more than forty years; and now my work is done." The life he lived among them; the truths of God, which, when in vigor, he so faithfully dispensed; the admonitions, and counsels, and consolations administered to them for nearly half a century—these were his dying bequests. "There are two questions," said he, "which I could wish put to the church, and to all the world. They are these: Which is of greatest value, the body or the soul? and for which are you making the most effort?" Then raising his enfeebled voice, he exclaimed: "Oh that all could see the priceless worth of the soul, as it now appears to me!" His pastor one day speaking of the Gospel as sustaining him in this hour of trial, he replied with great emphasis: "I would it could be proclaimed wide as the world, that the Gospel I have feebly endeavored to preach for many years is now my only and all-sufficient comfort." Some gentlemen of wealth having called to pay respect to him in his illness, when they were gone it was remarked by one present that they were without a Christian's hope; he answered with an expression of deep humility and gratitude to God: "I would not now exchange the blessed consciousness of having honestly endea-

vored to serve the cause of God and the spiritual interests of men, for all the wealth they have accumulated. Apart from any good which may have been done, or any results which may follow, there is a heavenly sweetness in the very consciousness of having sought to live for the Gospel."

He frequently desired those who visited him to sing some of the familiar songs of Zion, remarking: "I expect soon to be where there will be much singing, and I would fain hear a little now." One occasion was specially marked, when a little company assembled round his bed, and sung a number of well-known Conference hymns, selecting those which were common years before, when he was pastor. It deeply affected him; and, at his request, they closed by singing:

"There is a fountain filled with blood," &c.,

which he thought best expressed his feelings. When his body became emaciated and disagreeable even to himself, he would sometimes say: "That is a sweet promise, *He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body;*" and would add, "Yes, Jesus has an interest in this poor body yet." As his end drew near, he remarked to the pastor: "The world is receding, and I am glad of it. I leave it as one

would some unpleasant company with which he has been compelled for a time to associate; the society above looks infinitely more precious." The missionary cause lay much upon his heart. When extended conversation seemed to weary him in his feebleness, his pastor was wont to read to him from the prophecies relating to the future triumphs of the Gospel, and the hymns composed on the wide extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. This gave to the dying man of God apparently much comfort. The kindness experienced at the hands of the citizens of Homer filled him with gratitude, and he gave special charge that it should be acknowledged at the funeral. His sufferings were protracted beyond what was anticipated: for several weeks he seemed to be dying, and during the last two weeks he could receive no nourishment at all, except a few grains of medicine, mixed in a little water, and taken at intervals during each day. In reference to this, one remarked to him that God arranged all his concerns, and knew just how long and how much it was needful for him to suffer. He replied: "I sometimes feel ready to exclaim:

> 'How long, dear Saviour, oh how long,
> Thy chariot wheels delay!'

But then I think, why should all the powers of

nature be tasked, just to save me a few days of suffering? Why wish the way of God altered? It might—so complex are God's plans—cause lasting injury to thousands of souls, to spare me a short time of pain. The plan of God is all right: I would sink into His will." When too weak to converse with freedom, he was wont to reply to inquiries respecting the state of his mind: "I am almost home, Jesus is precious." "Peace." "All is clear." "Not a cloud, not a shade." And in this state he continued, till on the morning of May 10, 1851, in the seventy-first year of his age, his body sunk peacefully in death, and the "chariot of fire and horses of fire," ascending, bore him beyond our sight.

The concourse at his funeral, which occurred May 12, was immense. Rev. T. K. Fessenden, pastor of the Congregational Church in Homer, led the deeply affected multitude in prayer before the Throne. The funeral sermon, by request of the deceased, was preached by his early friend and brother, Rev. Lewis Leonard, of Cazenovia. The text selected by the preacher was Rev. xiv. 13: *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.* The mourning circle was then addressed,

and prayer offered, by the venerable "Father Purinton," of MacLean, who had for nearly forty years been intimately associated with the departed servant of God. The closing hymn was that singularly beautiful and expressive effusion of Montgomery, commencing—

"Friend after friend departs;"

the last verse of which awoke in many bosoms touching memories of the departed fathers, Kendrick and Peck, who had so lately preceded him whose lifeless form lay before them:

"Thus star by star declines,
Till all are passed away;
As morning high and higher shines,
To pure and perfect day:
Nor sink those stars in empty night,
But hide themselves in Heaven's own light."

During the solemn services, the stores were closed and all business suspended; the Academy, its trustees, officers, and students, united in the mourning concourse; and the whole community gathered in the house of God, where, amidst the sacred stillness of death, the falling tear and the heaving breast attested their grief, as for a departed father. On the following Sabbath, in accordance with the wish of the deceased, his pastor addressed the

congregation and community, on which occasion a discourse was delivered from 2 Kings ii. 12: *My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!* presenting a brief outline of his life and character.

The intelligence of his death reached Boston as the Missionary Union was about opening its session in that city, and spread the deepest sorrow through the assembled body. Public expressions of grief, and testimonials of his worth, were placed upon their records; in which they were followed by numerous other religious bodies, both East and West, attesting their high appreciation of his character and services, and deploring his removal as no ordinary loss to the churches of Christ.

The following minute in relation to his death was adopted by the Executive Committee of the Missionary Board, and entered upon their records:

"The Rev. Alfred Bennett, of Homer, New York, was for nearly a third of a century more or less intimately identified with the cause of Foreign Missions; and it is but just to his endeared memory, to declare that he uniformly gave the most unequivocal evidence of sincere, considerate, earnest devotion to its highest, holiest ends. He apprehended the object by an intelligent faith, and pursued it with a perseverance that never faltered.

At an early period he joyfully gave a son to the foreign service, who still survives, a useful laborer among the heathen. Subsequently, at the call of the Board, he gave himself to the home service, as an agent for the collection of funds, and the culture of the missionary spirit in the churches. In this department, for nineteen years, he was laborious, indefatigable, judicious, and eminently successful. His labors were widely extended; and in all his intercourse with the ministers and churches, his conduct was remarkably free from the breath of reproach. In every part of the field, his presence and services were cordially welcomed. His cheerful piety, his warm spirituality, his prudence, patience, and fidelity, caused him to be loved, respected, and trusted. Over a very wide surface his influence was such as to render the repetition of his visits an object of general desire. To this committee, and its predecessor, the Acting Board, the fruits of his agency were, in all respects, entirely satisfactory, and there was not an hour when his withdrawal from the service would not have been deprecated as a great loss. And it is due to his memory to bear testimony to the fact, that while he was industrious in efforts to supply a needy treasury, he was himself a liberal contributor. Though his compensation was always quite

limited, yet, by careful economy and exemplary self-denial, he regularly spared a generous portion of his salary, and returned it as a free-will offering to the cause which he served.

"The Executive Committee regard his removal as a peculiarly afflicting dispensation; and while they would bow submissively to that sovereign will which has transferred him from his work to his reward—from his sufferings to his rest—they would unite in devout supplication to the King in Zion, that others may be raised up to supply the breach, who shall as faithfully demonstrate their attachment to the missionary enterprise, by a similar spirit of love to Christ, and love to the souls of the perishing heathen."

An admirable sketch of his life and character was afterwards published in the "Missionary Magazine," from the discriminating and eloquent pen of Prof. John H. Raymond, of the University of Rochester. A most touching and truthful tribute to the memory of one of the fathers in the home-work of missions, was thus placed among the permanent records of the missionary enterprise.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHARACTER.

JESUS, the Son of God, though ascended up into heaven, and in His glorified human nature, adored by the innumerable throng of saints and angels, is still present in the midst of His disciples on earth. Now invested with all power, He selects and adapts His own servants for the distinct position assigned each in the work of the world's evangelization. He calls unto Him whom He will, directs their preparatory discipline and instruction, and sends them forth to the station where their work is appointed. The vast plan of human redemption, in its detail as well as its extent, in its means as well as its ends, is distinctly sketched before His infinite mind; and as the world rolls onward to the Judgment-bar, the changing epochs and the varied characters of its history are but developments of His government and illustrations of His wisdom.

It is from this stand-point we would view the

man of God, whose career has now been delineated. He was raised up for a peculiar work; and we may properly adore the wisdom displayed in the adaptation of the man to the age and events amidst which he was called to act. But it is not permitted us to repine, if the same Unerring Wisdom selects men of somewhat modified external qualities to carry on that work, now at a more advanced stage and progressing under altered circumstances. The lofty principles which animated him are of eternal excellency; but the outward characteristics were only adventitious, and must of necessity alter with the altered form of society. The hardy pioneer, whose axe rings in the western forests, at the outposts of civilization, might not, with the same external peculiarities, be the man to occupy an influential position amidst the generation, whose thronging population a century after shall densely fill the region, where now the solitary wilds echo the crack of his rifle, and the earth resounds with the crash of the lofty cedar felled by his hand. No man could live his own life over. The world can never have a second Luther, or Calvin, or Knox; the conjunction of circumstances in which each acted can never recur. The only niche in the temple of history fitted for such a man is filled. The building of

God, in the progress of its erection, requires at each successive period a class of workmen differing in exterior character from those who preceded them; and this doubtless will continue to be the fact, until, beneath the hand of the Divine Architect, the magnificent structure rise to its completion, and stands in "the perfection of beauty." The servants of our God are all, indeed, partakers of the same grace; they eat of the bread of life, and drink of the heavenly fountain. One in heart, one in aim, one in hope; they are gathering, under the guidings of the one Heavenly Spirit, into the common home of their Father and their Redeemer. But the parts assigned them in the one work are widely diverse, and their stations are fixed at differing epochs in its progress. He who toils with effective force in the quarry, might not be adapted, with careful chisel, to shape and adjust the block to its position in the edifice; while the man who could perform well the latter service, might still fail in ability to accomplish the polisher's work. The fathers in the ministry did nobly the work of their generation; they are passing from their toils to their reward. We may emulate their godly lives and holy zeal; we may seek to catch their elevated spirit, and take up their falling mantles. But we may not despond,

or impeach the wisdom of the Heavenly Builder, if, in appointing those who shall enter into their labors, He calls men of somewhat modified capabilities. As wise master-builders, they laid the foundation: others build thereon. *But let every man take heed how he build thereupon.*

The writer would not here indulge in the language of indiscriminate eulogy. The expressed wishes, both living and dying, of the departed servant of God, forbid any tribute to his memory beyond the plainest statement of facts. It is proper, however, that a brief sketch of the prominent features in his character should close these pages.

He was gifted with a powerful physical frame, fitted to endure great hardship. In the early settlement of Homer, when the settlers reared their log houses, no man was more effective at a "raising" than the "Elder," as he was usually designated. Though his constitution received several severe shocks from sickness, he continued to possess, almost to the last, extraordinary bodily power. Without this, he could never have accomplished such an amount of labor, amidst the exposures and privations to which he was subjected.

His natural disposition was buoyant and vivacious. He walked on the sunny side of life. His

thoughts were ordinarily cheerful; his manners frank and social; his conversation enlivening and abounding in illustrative anecdote and pithy expression, by which his thoughts would print themselves deep in the memory of the hearer. This cheerfulness of spirit contributed much to his health and vigor. Obstacles could not daunt him: care did not crush him.

Unceasing activity was one of his chief characteristics. When a pastor, besides the ordinary duties of the Sabbath, he was accustomed during the week to preach in different neighborhoods, wherever a congregation could be collected; and his earnest labors in the school-houses for miles around are still remembered by many living. "Better wear out than rust out," was his common motto. In his agency he was restless in the prosecution of the work before him. The amount of labor performed was immense. His plans were commonly laid with great precision, and it was rarely the time for their execution exceeded that which he had assigned. And often, while others were considering the obstacles and calculating the consequences, his energy had already accomplished the work. On his dying bed, reviewing the scenes of his active life, he said, when referring to some who had blamed him for what had seem-

ed to them over-exertion : "I am not sorry I have tried to *work* for Jesus, but I wish I had done a *great deal more.*"

As a citizen, he was distinguished by an eminently public spirit. Though never allowing himself to be associated with political movements, except on one occasion, which he ever regretted,* he took a deep interest in passing events as affecting the welfare of our country. The prosperity of his own village especially lay near his heart. And though in later life called to visit nearly all parts of the Union, he always returned with apparently increased affection to the scene of his earlier ministry. No man loved Homer more. As a trustee of the Academy, he was warmly interested in the promotion of its welfare ; and it is not too much to remark that the noble institution there located has found no warmer advocate of its character abroad,

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* He was a candidate for the convention to revise the Constitution of the State of New York, in 1821, but the party nominating him was in the minority. He was defeated. He allowed his name to be used by advice of his brethren in the ministry, and others whose judgment he esteemed ; but though it seems in no respect to have injured his ministerial character and usefulness, maturer reflection led him always to regard it as a mistaken step. His successful competitor was Samuel Nelson, now Judge in the Supreme Court of the United States.

and perhaps to no single citizen, if we except the gentlemen who compose its excellent faculty of instruction, is it more largely indebted for its wide reputation in this and other States.

He was a liberal man. At the close of his pastoral labors, he found himself worth, by the rise which had taken place in the value of property, about two thousand dollars; and it was his settled principle never to accumulate more than this. His salary when pastor never exceeded four hundred dollars; during the larger part of the time, it was only three hundred, and a portion of this was ordinarily paid in produce. He gave largely to objects of benevolence, and the needy always found in him a sympathizing heart and a ready hand to help. For the support of public worship in the church of which he was a member, he was one of the largest contributors. The commodious lecture-room connected with their house of worship was erected exclusively at his expense, and by him presented to the society. The tours he took in his agency usually cost the Missionary Union nothing, as he defrayed his own travelling expenses; and a large sum was annually contributed from his salary, in addition, to support that sacred cause for which his voice was ever pleading. There was a large-heartedness in

all his pecuniary transactions, which evinced always the slight estimate he put upon the wealth of this world when compared with treasures laid up in heaven.

Integrity was a marked trait in him. He did nothing in the dark; his nature was frank and open. A blunt honesty distinguished his manner, and so transparent was his life, that even the suspicion of misdealing could never fasten itself upon him. There was that in his countenance and air —a godly sincerity, devoid of all art and mystery —which bespoke your confidence and commanded your respect. His was not an intriguing spirit, acting under a mask and seeking sinister ends; but with a face open as the day, and with a heart outspoken in words of unmistakable import, he pursued with clear and steady view the noblest objects. Herein, doubtless, was a main element of his power. It was a common remark with the ungodly at his death, "Whatever may be true of other Christians, *he* was a good man." Men who seldom attended the services of any sanctuary, would go when he was announced as the preacher, saying, they liked to hear Father Bennett preach, because they thought he believed what he said. And to the last, few men were able to command so large a congregation in Homer as the earliest and revered pastor.

He was much sought as a counsellor. The younger pastors were wont for many years, in his later life, to seek his advice as that of a father. Churches often asked his counsel in cases of difficulty, and in the settlement of ministers. In the appointment of agents, the Executive Committee relied much upon his judgment. He became early a member of the Foreign Mission Board, in which office he continued until death. He was officially connected as an adviser in most of the benevolent institutions of the Baptist denomination. At his decease, he was President of the New York Baptist State Convention, and first Vice-President of the New York Baptist Union for Ministerial Education.

His views of the agency were pure and elevated. He regarded the office of agents as essential to the progress of the missionary enterprise. In a letter addressed to Rev. Edward Bright, Home Secretary, April 12, 1850, he says:

"In all my acquaintance with pastors, churches, and their collections with and without an agent, for almost eighteen years, I am convinced that travelling agents are indispensable to success, if *much* is expected to be gathered. There are pastors who do not need assistance, and would do well if no agent was in the field, some

of whom, however, are always glad to have an agent call on them, as it renders their labors lighter. There are good people, also, who would live religion faithfully, if there were no ministers to preach the Gospel, who are still very glad to enjoy the ministrations of the Word, because it strengthens them. I deliberately think that agents are about as necessary to success in benevolent enterprises, as preachers are in church building. *But they must be good men.* An indifferent man will do more hurt than good. The reason why we cannot obtain more first-rate men as travelling agents, is because there is not consecration enough to the service of God. Jesus Christ *went about.* Paul travelled night and day, and labored in the temple, in the deep, in the wilderness, in the city, and in the country."

The collection of funds was always with him a secondary object. Speaking of agents as often estimated by the number of dollars and cents they collect, he said: "That was never my *first* object, but to promote a *religious principle*, and instruct the churches in their obligation to keep the commands of Christ, especially to carry out the great commission. I have ever considered myself rather as a pioneer, to break ground and put in the seed for others to harvest from; and if,

after I am dead, some good does not result from my labors, it will be apparent that I have failed to accomplish what I intended." With a fixed adherence to this exalted view of his work, he never sought to create a temporary excitement, by appeals to the passions, for the sake of a large collection; but his object was to inspire and strengthen the principles of benevolent action, from the high and holy motives furnished in the Gospel. Each visit to the churches, thus conducted, prepared the way for a heartier welcome and more generous contribution on his return.

His character as a Christian was marked by fixedness of principle. His was no hot-house piety, which flourished only in the heat of a revival, but withered and died in the bleak atmosphere and chilling blasts of a spiritual winter; but you saw it as a true plant of Heaven, planted by our Heavenly Father, growing and blooming at all seasons. He always insisted that the discharge of Christian duties ought not to be affected by the fluctuation of mere personal feelings, but be guided by fixed religious principle; and his own earnest, energetic life was a striking exemplification of his teaching. For more than fifty years, from that solemn hour when he publicly dedicated himself to Christ, till he left the

world, through sunshine and storm, his Christian career was one of steady progress, and his Christian character unstained by any serious blot. Many instances of his faithfulness are related, which illustrate the remark of the wise man, *A word spoken in due season, how good it is!* One recently reported may perhaps be properly mentioned here, as an example of many. In a Western city, a friend took him to a Daguerreotype establishment, to obtain his likeness. As he was passing from the room, a young man who had performed the work, looking at him, remarked that he had impressed an exact image of the original. Mr. Bennett, laying his hand upon his shoulder, replied, "True, and may the Saviour's image be impressed on your heart!" The remark was forgotten by him who uttered it. But on returning to that city, a few weeks after, having occasion to visit again the establishment, he found the young man rejoicing in hope. That word had proved the arrow of conviction to his soul.

There was, also, a simplicity of faith in God, which preserved him from desponding in regard to the cause of Christ. Though during his earlier years subjected to painful fear respecting his personal salvation, he never doubted the safety of the

church. It was a common remark with him: "I have no doubt that all the saints will finally reach Heaven; for that is revealed in the Word of God. But I find no statement in it that Alfred Bennett will get there. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things.*" In the seasons of affliction through which the church in Homer passed, as well as in the darker providential dispensations which attended the missionary enterprise, his voice was always heard in tones of cheerful hope. There was a simple-hearted dependence upon God, which at such times banished despair from his own bosom, and seemed to inspire courage and confidence in those associated with him.

To learning he made no pretensions. The lack of a thorough course of mental training for the ministry was always to him a matter of deep regret. His vigorous intellect, however, and strong powers of observation, made much compensation for this defect; and his extended general knowledge, attained rather from intercourse with men than from books, enriched all his communications, and gave great value to his counsels. A painful sense of his own deficiencies in literary culture, made him for many years past an ardent friend of the cause of education, especially as connected with the preparation of the youthful ministry.

His theological tendencies were Calvinistic; though he always preferred that his view of the Gospel should not receive its designation from any name of man. He loved "the old paths;" the doctrines of grace were so intimately interwoven with his religious experience, that he spoke of them as "out of the abundance of the heart." He wielded these ponderous weapons of the Gospel with singular power. On the subject of the Atonement, he inclined strongly to the views of Andrew Fuller, whose works were always with him a favorite study. Among the theological books in his library, which appear to have been most used, may be mentioned the works of Isaac Backus, Scott, Bunyan, Edwards, and Dr. Hawker, with Hervey's Dialogues, and Buchanan's Missionary Treatises; some of which have now ceased to attract the attention of the religious public. But his chief text-book in theology was the Bible. In the closet or the fields, at the fireside or on the journey, this was his constant companion; and few men have become more familiar with its letter, or more thoroughly imbued with its elevated spirit.

He was a decided Baptist. The distinctive principles of his denomination, he regarded as constituting an important part of the Gospel, and essential to the ultimate triumph of Christianity in the

world. He had no fellowship for that sickly, sentimental liberalism, which, for the sake of a seeming peace, would modify or even forsake fundamental principles of the Gospel. The tendency, now so widely prevalent, to clip and shorten our creed, for the alleged sake of union, met no favor at his hands. He admired and loved a decided, conscientious man, who believes his religious faith based on the Bible, and reverences it as the truth of God; and however far such an one might differ in conviction from him, he was ready to accord to him the honor of integrity. But of the compromising trifler in things sacred, who seeks to please men rather than God, and is ready to barter his convictions and sacrifice truth, for the sake of making his platform square with another's, he was not over tolerant, and his rebukes would commonly be pointed and strong. Yet none could properly charge him with bigotry. The right of private judgment which he claimed for himself, he cheerfully conceded to others, and ever maintained the most fraternal intercourse with Christian brethren of other names. During the earlier years of his ministry in Homer, Christians of the different denominations were accustomed to assemble together for social worship; and in many precious seasons of revival enjoyed there, some of his choicest co-

laborers, for whom he always retained the warmest affection, were members of the Congregational Church—many of whom ascended before him, but some of them remain unto this day.

He had extraordinary fervor and power in prayer. Though never irreverent in his addresses before the Throne, he spoke as one accustomed to hold communion with God; and none who listened to his petitions in public could doubt that he enjoyed richly the devotions of the closet. His heart readily entered into sympathy with the immediate circumstances around him, and the wants and interests then pressing he spread out in simple, fervent language, and often with overflowing emotion. Few could remain inattentive during his public prayer: its adaptation and earnestness made that exercise, which to many is the most difficult service of the sanctuary, one of much interest, and not unfrequently of deep feeling. It is related, that, at the designation of Rev. J. Wade to the Burman Mission, in 1823, the services of which were held at Utica, Mr. Bennett was called to offer the prayer. The Spirit of the Lord seemed to come upon him; the auditors were borne with him in spirit, as if into the presence of the Throne; and such was the holy earnestness with which he commended the departing missionaries to God,

that all present seemed to feel an assurance of their protection. A gentleman present remarked that he would insure, at half the usual rates, the vessel that bore them; for it could not be lost while they were on board. This prayer is still remembered with great interest by many who were then present. At the services at Philadelphia, in 1829, when his son Cephas was publicly set apart as missionary to Burmah, it was the father's lot to offer the prayer of consecration. A similar Divine influence seems to have been manifest on this occasion. In the record of the proceedings, preserved in the public papers of that day, it is said: Mr. Cephas Bennett "was then committed, with his companion, by Alfred Bennett, his father, in an appeal to God most solemn and affecting, melting every heart and drawing tears from every eye. This part of the scene was of too intense a character for description either by the tongue or the pen." These effects were not produced by studied prearrangement, but it was the spontaneous outgushing of a capacious soul, in ardent sympathy with the interests of the occasion, accustomed to give expression to its inmost emotions at the Mercy-Seat, and pervaded by holy influence from on high. Here undoubtedly was one of the chief sources of his strength. He had power with God; and the

conviction of this, everywhere felt, gave him also power with men.

As a preacher, he was one of a class whose dependence on the aid of the Holy Spirit was habitual and heartfelt. "Utterance" was sought from God as a matter of high practical moment; and if he was not "in the spirit" while speaking, no amount of premeditation could supply the lack. This calamity, as he ever deemed it, sometimes befel him: it seemed to paralyze his mental powers, and put him to utter confusion. On some occasions of special public interest, he thus suffered from spiritual desertion, and, after ineffectually endeavoring to unfold his subject, entirely failed to present the intended view, and sat down not a little confused and mortified. Ordinarily, however, he was "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," and spoke the word with power. In seasons of revival, or on public occasions of absorbing religious interest, he would often speak as if in the presence of God, with an overflowing heart and heavenly fervor, and his auditory, borne with the powerful current of his emotions, would be melted to tears under the affecting exhibitions he gave of the Gospel. His resources were at ready command; and probably some of the most powerful of his public efforts were made when unexpectedly summoned to

preach. This sent him upon his knees, and called into action all the powers of his soul.

In his ordinary ministration he was eminently simple and evangelical. His discourses, though not marked by the grace and finish of scholarship, and, often from necessity, slightly studied, bore the evidence of much biblical knowledge and strong practical sense. They were the outgushings of a glowing heart and a rich religious experience; and few ever heard him, in even his most unstudied efforts, without gaining some new conceptions of divine truth. There was a fervor and holy unction attending his preaching, which often woke the slumbering conscience and touched the heart, when lofty speculation and mere logical deduction could have effected nothing; and the earnestness of his appeals forced the conviction upon you that he felt the value of the undying soul, and dwelt in near prospect of the realities of judgment and eternity. Up to his death, there were few public men in his denomination who possessed more power to command the attention and awaken the holier feelings of the heart among all classes. Others there were whose learning was more varied and profound, whose diction had more of polish, and whose arguments were arranged with more of logical exactness; but few, if any, had greater

power to move the hearts of the masses, and animate the church of God to high and holy exertion.

It is chiefly, however, in the character of a devoted friend and advocate of missions he has been distinguished in public life. He took enlarged and comprehensive views of the design of the Gospel. The world stretched out before him with its wants and woes, and all the sympathies and energies of his capacious soul were enlisted in the work of diffusing abroad God's great remedy. On his dying bed, the conversation once turned on the prospects just opening before him in the eternal world; and his pastor, speaking of the reunion of saints in the presence of Christ, alluded to some with whom he had been familiar, and who had entered into rest before him. He replied: "I do not know that I anticipate greater pleasure in meeting them than in mingling with redeemed spirits of converted heathen, for whom I have labored, and whose eternal welfare I have sought." His prayers, as well as his heartiest toils, ever contemplated the general diffusion of the religion of Christ over the whole world. And at the last, the spiritual interests of the perishing millions of earth lay near his soul, and the long predicted glories of that ap-

proaching day, when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth, were among the latest thoughts he breathed, and seemed to fill his mind with holy delight.

But I will here pause. He has gone from earth and entered the presence of God. His venerable form lies cold in the grave, and the emancipated spirit, we trust, rejoices before the Throne. But, though dead, he yet speaketh. Defects, no doubt, he had, and none were more painfully sensible of it than himself; but a consistent Christian life of half a century, unstained by one dishonorable blot, spent with all the ardor of a powerful mind in self-denying energetic effort for the welfare of others, and closed in peaceful triumph, has a voice full of instruction. It speaks of the power of the Gospel to subdue and sanctify the strongest natural passions, and devote them to the holy work of blessing a perishing world. It utters the high praises of the grace of God, in reclaiming and pardoning one who was once in bitter enmity with Him, and keeping him through strong temptations and fearful conflicts safe unto the end. It bids us be followers of Him as he followed Christ, ever toiling, ever trusting, assured that Christian faithfulness is the certain precursor of Christian triumph.

The memory of "Father Bennett" will linger long in the hearts of the people of God. Associated with hallowed recollections of the venerated Kendrick and Peck, and others of kindred spirit, his name will be transmitted to after times as one of the pioneers of the Gospel, and a stalwart defender of the truth of God. The sound practical wisdom, the effectual fervent prayer, the holy character, and earnest zeal of these godly men were a tower of strength in the midst of the denomination, and as one after another of them has parted from us and gone up into glory, the cry has risen from the bereaved heart of the earthly church: *My Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!* They were among the earlier prophets of our people;

> "holy men,
> Who lived and walked with God;"

and their power before the Throne, their heaven-directed counsels, and their mighty deeds are recorded, not so much on the written page as upon the moral enterprises they originated, the sacred institutions they founded and reared, and in the hearts of the people of God. When the scroll of

history, as written in heaven, shall be unrolled before the assembled world in the day of final adjudication, these servants of God will doubtless be seen conspicuous among the eminent witnesses for the truth and actors in the moral scenes of the past generation.

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